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This dissertation explores the growing social, economic, and environmental crisis and the resulting culture of fragmentation, destruction and moral disconnection. Utilizing a semi-autobiographical approach that grounds my research in the context of my living network of relations, I investigate what it means to be an educator and activist engaged in healing and repairing the world. Exploring the balance between theory and practice, and differentiation and bonding, my focus is on the catalyzing experiences that have the potential to ignite a fundamental shift in consciousness, agency, and imaginative possibilities.

Moving between my own storied life and the larger theoretical questions raised, I explore ways of knowing and learning that have the potential to create a shift from empire to earth democracy—from destructiveness to nurturing mutually responsible communities of care. The voices of my students are included to elucidate a path toward open-ended, inclusive, intersubjective and lovingly relational communities.

RENEWING THE CULTURAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL COMMONS:

CREATING COMMUNITIES OF MUTUAL CARE,

SOLIDARITY, AND RECIPROCITY

by

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Approved by

_____
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To my wonderful parents who taught me

how to love life, live responsibly, and

participate fully in caring and creating anew.

This dissertation has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of

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me to stay focused even in times of grief when my heart was broken and my mind distracted.

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PREFACE

At this critical juncture in human civilization, our world is exploding with constant and unending violence. Environmental and economic systems are collapsing as we compete for dwindling natural resources. Over half of the world's people suffer from crippling, grinding poverty and devastation. To understand the complexity of our most urgent challenges and possibilities, we must first understand the interconnected political, cultural, ecological and spiritual crisis we face as members of this planet.

An emerging consensus globally speaks to the dire need for a comprehensive reorganization of the core structures of empire and power. In a world increasingly ruled by transnational corporate interests, greed, and extraction, a central ingredient in understanding alternative responses asks how people are persuaded to turn their backs against those who are suffering.

This thesis seeks to address the most pressing questions for educators and community leaders to facilitate a shift from reactivity to actively building alternatives— from market-based relations to *all our relations*—from cynicism to imagination and creativity. People around globe are beginning to organize locally and globally around common needs for food, shelter and long-term sustainability, coming together in mutuality and respect, solidarity, and determination to solve the problems of the world *collectively.*

Investigating the obstacles to co-creating the collective will to bring about a major restructuring of our world leads to an exploration of pedagogical possibilities for future work. From market fundamentalism to living earth democracy— the participation, imagination and hard work of all earth's citizens is required.

In Chapter I, I explore the brokenness of current civilization, the critical challenges we face, and the fierce urgency of the work ahead to build the community bonds of trust and respect necessary to heal, repair, and preserve the earth. Chapter II is an exploration of my own historical network of human relationships and addresses a systems approach to understanding interrelated phenomena. I critique dualistic ways of knowing that stand in the way of creating a major shift in consciousness and action.

Chapter III addresses the necessity of accepting the paradoxes of "living" democracy and the inclusion of the whole Earth in our deliberations for future work. In chapter IV, I address embodied ways of teaching and learning by including the voices of my students and reflections of experience teaching in the South. The shift from what divides us and reinforces fragmentation to inspire collaborative thinking and collective participation toward the creation of sustainable communities is discussed. Chapter V weaves together threads of thought and experience with a greater connection to the surrounding community in which I live. I conclude with recommendations for renewing the cultural and environmental commons

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CHAPTER I

"THE DEEPEST GRIEF ABOUT THE SHATTERING OF THE WORLD"
Paul Hawken (2007, p.29)

We too must hurl ourselves against and through the literal and metaphorical concrete
that contains and constrains us, that keeps us from talking about what is more
important to us, that keeps us from living the way our bones know we can
(Jensen, 2000, p. 75).

We stand at a critical moment in Earth's history, a time when humanity must choose
its future. As the world becomes increasingly interdependent and fragile, the future at
once holds great promise. To move forward we must recognize that, in the midst of a
magnificent diversity of cultures and life forms, we are one human family and an
Earth community with a common destiny. We must join together to bring forth a
sustainable global society founded on respect for nature, universal human rights,
economic justice, and a culture of peace. Towards this end, it is imperative that we,
the peoples of the Earth, declare our responsibility to one another, to the greater
community of life, and to future generations (Earth Charter Associates, Ltd., 2000).

In this chapter I explore how we arrived at this critical juncture in civilization.

Without an understanding of the ways people are persuaded to consent to participate in

and subconsciously perpetuate the very values we profess to deplore, we will not be able

to co-create a vision of what is possible to meet the growing global needs to sustain life

in the coming era. What are the complex relations of power, culture, and pedagogy that

create a consciousness of denial and greed, and what is required to radically alter the

current decline?

Shapiro (2006) discusses the current age of uncertainty and flux in which old

barriers collapse and new ones are constructed as a fluid process with porous, ill-defined

borders and boundaries. Personal identities become works in progress, dependent on the whims of a consumerist popular culture that encourages constant redefining and re-imaging. Rather than consider the preservation of our pasts and an historical appreciation of our ancestors, we seem addicted to a recurrent celebration of individual change. As a result, our society seems void of a moral and spiritual rootedness that could anchor us in "enduring webs of meaning and community" (Shapiro, p. 73).

A new convergence of consensus is emerging on the world scene that speaks to the urgent need to transform the core structures of empire and power. How we respond to the growing world social, environmental, and economic crisis as educators and community members depends on our ability to reflect honestly on the past, reach across the aisles (and isles) to find community with others of diverse cultures and ways of knowing, and to co-create new intercultural and inter-generational ways of building sustainable communities of solidarity and trust.

The devastation of the city of New Orleans from Hurricane Katrina in 2005 and the abhorrent response of the U.S. government was an appalling reminder of the systemic neglect of the U.S. government toward its own people. Before the hurricane struck the Gulf Coast, my mother and I were in the process of planning a trip to New Orleans to research lost family ties. My maternal grandmother grew up in New Orleans in a French–Cajun family of six. My great-grandmother, the sole supporter of her family, lived a meager existence with help from other family members. As we watched the flooding in New Orleans, we felt a sense of grief that our family connections would be lost forever. I

felt the mistreatment of its citizens on a more personal level as I realized the possibility of our own relatives floating belly up in the flooding.

One picture remains vivid in my brain. As the poor people of New Orleans stood stranded, eagerly awaiting assistance, the National Guard stood facing them with guns in hand—guns pointed at the very people who had lost everything. Were the soldiers worried these people would steal the small bottles of water they were handing out or were they more concerned about defending the "property" of others? The slogan of "profits before people" became glaringly apparent.

The protection of property appeared to be more important than the needs of human beings for water and shelter. The very victims became the criminals. This outrage continues as we witness more and more low-income people being driven off their land by corporate designs to reconstruct major cities into playgrounds for the rich and famous. This process is compounded by gentrification of urban cities, and the indifference toward low-income people who are driven off their land and forced to live elsewhere. Many survivors in New Orleans were placed in government trailers, which were later deemed unlivable due to high levels of formaldehyde.

We live under the numbing influence of a market-driven culture that emphasizes and perpetuates competition, materialism, greed, and disregard for the needs of others and the land that sustains us. The result is a culture of separation, isolation, competition, and disconnection. Once people fade from the public consciousness, they rarely reappear on our collective radar screen. New Orleans will remain a blip in the memory of most Americans, who are consumed by their own material gain and wellbeing.

Our preoccupation with the individual pursuit of material wealth and mythic fantasies of success clouds the possibility of acknowledging or understanding how others around the globe suffer to maintain our excess. "We live in a world increasingly torn apart by the sheer horror of social and economic inequality" (Shapiro, 2006, p. 121). This realization makes it possible for some to watch the government's response to the devastated citizens of New Orleans with absolute disregard.

Here in the United States, more than 10 million Americans are jobless. Of young people between the ages of 16 to 24, 5.5 million are out of work, out of school, and not included in unemployment figures. Over forty-five million Americans have no health insurance including more than 9.2 million children (Children's Defense Fund, 2008). In the richest country in the world (using market-based measurements), more than 35.5 million people went hungry in 2006. About half of them were children (Hawken, 2007).

In a report issued by The Economic Policy Institute in July of 2002 it was estimated that in the previous year an average CEO earned more in one workday than an average worker earned in 52 weeks (Mishel, 2002). From 1995 to 2005, the average pay of a CEO in the United States rose 298% while an average worker's pay during the same period increased only 4.3% (Poplan, 2008).

In his book *Blessed Unrest: How the Largest Movement in the World Came into Being and Why No One Saw it Coming,* Paul Hawken (2007) argues that by mid-century, the resources available for each person on the planet will be cut in half. Currently, more than half of our earth's population lives on less than $2 per day. More than 1 billion people in the world search unsuccessfully for work to support and feed their families.

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Half of the world's children live in poverty, and 30,000 children die every day from a preventable disease. The World Health Organization estimated in 2004 that 11 million children under the age of 5 die each year from preventable or treatable diseases (www.globalactionforchildren.org). At any given moment, more than 60 million young children in the world show signs of acute malnutrition and are at serious risk of death (www.doctorswithoutborders.org).

Based on figures from the Office of Economic Cooperation and Development (OCED, 2008), the gap between rich and poor around the globe has widened exponentially over the last 20 years, job losses and home foreclosures have skyrocketed, and more and more people have fallen into poverty. As we enter into a global recession, it is the people at the bottom of the rung economically who will suffer the most.

Hawken (2007) asks, "What if we are entering a transitional phase of human development where what *works* is invisible because most heads are turned to the past?" (p. 26) Grossman (1989) argues we must engage in the complex relations of culture, power, and pedagogy that permeate our consciousness and ways of knowing to break through the cultural myths that tear us apart and prevent the necessary connections that sustain future work.

Transnational Globalization, Unequal Distribution of Resources

The dominant system of economic globalization has prioritized profit making at any expense, regardless of its effects on indigenous populations around the world. Global capitalist economic systems respond primarily to the interests of those who own the means of production, with disregard for the most basic needs of the people within their work force—let alone local communities whose resources have been extracted.

Transnational corporate globalization is based on creating global cultures of exclusion, dispossession, and scarcity. "Corporate rule through globalization continues to build upon the foundation that colonialism created and continues to leave behind it a trail of devastation and destruction" (Shiva, 2005, p. 29). As corporations become transnational they are less and less responsible to the democratic needs of people as they operate outside of local democratic structures to rob and plunder natural resources the world over. Transnational corporate cultures are maintained through the same hegemonic media, a media that are increasingly blind to the democratic interests of their own national governments and people.

In the last 20 years, economic globalization has widened the gap between rich and poor within countries, between rich and poor countries, and between men and women (Mander, 2004). Extreme inequality in income and the ability to sustain a family reflects the distortion in the allocation of resources and plays an undemocratic role by excluding all but the very wealthy from democratic participation. As people are forced to move to find work to support their families, the social dislocation and tensions that are created

have become among the greatest threats to peace, security, and sustainability around the

world.

Vandana Shiva (2005), a world-renowned environmental leader and physicist,

believes the ownership of the wealthy is based on the dispossession of the poor. When the

common public resources of the people become privatized, the poor are disowned

economically, culturally, and politically. Mander (2004) argues that the clear-cutting of

hillsides around the globe contributes to the floods that sweep away homes and local

crops of the people who live below. As the wealthy few elites engage in excessive energy

consumption, they become unaware of the dire consequences of their own excess, which

contributes to storms, tidal waves, and flooding that kill and displace hundreds of

thousands of people living in Bangladesh (p. 99).

> The privatization of public goods and services and the commoditization of the life
> support systems of the poor is a double theft, which robs people of both economic and
> cultural security. Millions, deprived of a secure living and identity, are driven toward
> extremist, terrorist, fundamentalist movements. These movements simultaneously
> identify the other as enemy and construct exclusivist identities to separate themselves
> from those with whom, in fact, they are ecologically, culturally, and economically,
> connected. (Shiva, 2005, p. 3)

Wherever there has been economic restructuring to create the "new economic

global order," economic disparity has increased, as people lose their jobs and livelihoods.

Although the people of the United States represent less than 5% of the world's

population, we consume approximately 30% of the world's natural resources (Hawken,

2007). As we become less aware of our own complicity and of the consequences our

massive consumption have on others around the globe, we become better at denying that such a relationship exists.

While unequal distribution of wealth persists and is perpetuated by idealized notions of survival of the fittest rather than collective responsibility, world powers seem to find sufficient funds to pay for the armaments of war and destruction. The United States, for example, has the financial capability of spending $522.5 billion for the illegal war and occupation of Iraq, but claims not to have the revenue to allocate for the more than 45-plus million Americans who cannot afford health insurance and therefore medical care for themselves and their children (National Priorities Project, 2008).

According to the National Priorities Project (nationalpriorities.org), the U.S. budget for the fiscal year 2009 ignored the basic needs of the American people by cutting funds for basic services, while increasing tax cuts for those most able to afford them. Pentagon spending for 2009 rose to $541 billion, while the U.S. Congress reduced federal aid to state and local governments by $19.2 billion. The United States has 735 military bases in other countries around the globe worth at least $127 billion, which is larger than the gross domestic products of most countries (Chalmers, 2009).

The cost of the Iraq War per day, for the first four years, has been approximately $720 million. With this amount of money, the United States could have provided 6, 482 families with homes, 163, 525 people with health care, 34,904 four-year scholarships for university students and 1,153,846 children with free school lunches (nationalpriorities.org). Among the many horrors of the U.S.–led war and occupation of

Iraq is the estimated 2.7 million displaced people within Iraq and the more than 2 million Iraqi refugees living in neighboring countries, such as Jordan and Syria (Berrigan, 2008).

In such a climate, human beings become commodities to be bought and sold. U.S. State Department figures taken from the 2006 Trafficking in Persons Report indicate that as many as 800,000 people are bought and sold across national borders annually, most of whom are women and children (p. 6). Many are lured to other countries with the promise of work or other benefits and seduced by illusions of freedom and prosperity.

Destruction and Degradation of Environment

Environmental activist and writer Derrick Jensen (2006) believes the needs of the natural world are far more significant than the needs of an economic system. The system of civilization is based on extraction rather than sustainability. If our natural communities are destroyed, we cannot survive. Privatization and industrialization are assumed to be in the best interests of our civilization but in actuality are based on violence and destruction.

Extraction and drive for profit give explanation to the recent oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. To date the official estimate is between 86 million and 169 million gallons of oil spewed into the Gulf waters from an explosion of an underground well (*News & Record*, July 9, 2010). The lack of oversight, irresponsible decisions, and outdated emergency response systems are a few of the many violations committed by British Petroleum and other transnational corporations involved in the construction and maintenance of equipment.

Harm done to the natural world reduces our ability to understand and address the horrors committed against the human community. As we mindlessly extract and consume the earth's resources, we lose our ability to feel the richness of the human spirit and ancient interconnections that hold us together in communion and mutual purpose (Berry in Jensen, 2008). The extreme pandemic of global poverty and human destructiveness is part of the "self-created patterns of systematic pillage" and breakdown of our environmental systems (Hawken, 2007, p. 165).

Scientists report there is more carbon dioxide in the atmosphere today than at any other time in the last 650,000 years. There is a consensus among leading scientists that, in the absence of effective policy changes to reduce greenhouse gases, the global temperatures of the earth will rise significantly, leading to severe alterations to the climate. As early as 2100, the world could face abrupt, catastrophic, and irreversible consequences, such as more intense storms, more pronounced droughts, and the disappearance of major cities along coastal areas due to rising sea levels (fightglobalwarming.com). Oxfam (2008) estimates that nearly 2 billion people in developing countries have been direly affected by climate-related disasters since the 1990s. In 2007 approximately 248 million people were affected by the extreme flooding in 11 South Asian countries. By 2025, up to 250 million people across Africa could face severe water shortages (Oxfam, 2008).

Fragmentation of Community

As we witness worldwide destruction, we are confronted with the resulting fragmentation of civil and community life. Within our competitive and highly individualistic consumerist culture, which emphasizes individualist identity and ego gratification, constant progress and change, we are not encouraged to connect across generations or across and between cultures and subcultures. Absent from our educational systems is an emphasis on community, civic engagement, and collective responsibility.

In the age of uncertainty and insecurity, we stick to communities of the same to protect ourselves from diverse ways of thinking and challenging existing norms. Rather than consider the preservation of our pasts and a historical appreciation of our ancestors, we seem addicted to a constant celebration of change and *progress*. As a result, our society seems void of a moral and spiritual rootedness that could anchor us in sustainable webs of community and caring.

In his book *Community, Seeking Safety in an Insecure World,* Bauman traces early pre-industrial concepts of community, which were experienced as "closely knit groupings stemming out of biographies shared through a long history of frequent and intense interaction" (2001, p. 48). In the current age of uncertainty or what Bauman calls the "perpetually changing social environment," community is no longer a place where personal loyalties, interdependency, extended family ties, and concerns for the common good permeate our relationships and consciousness.

Bruce Perry (2001), a neurobiologist and internationally recognized authority on brain development, also writes about the absence of community in present-day relationships. Perry believes the biological unit of survival is the clan. The traditional notion that clan or extended family (similar to indigenous tribes) is the biological unit of survival has gradually been replaced by the notion of survival of the fittest and the individual pursuit of wealth and pleasure. Survival of the individual and/or the individual family unit reigns supreme at whatever cost to the larger community, or worse yet, at whatever cost to the survival of the earth community.

Perry points out that historically, before the Industrial Revolution, we lived in groups of 30 to 40 people. We now live in groups of two to three people in larger, disconnected and fragmented communities. Perry calls this socio-cultural devolution or the Tran generational loss of cultural information and rootedness to the past. This deterioration of the social fabric, according to Perry, is a prelude to violence (2001).

Robert Jensen (2009) points out for some 95% of human existence, people lived in small social groups dependent on hunting and gathering. These small groups nurtured our bonds toward each other and the earth and were profoundly interconnected. Living in small towns and villages, where people shared history and cared for each other has been replaced by the process of industrialization, private consumption, and the individual pursuit of material wealth and pleasure. Understanding this evolution or devolution means that, as a species, we are not well adapted for the society we have created.

Jensen believes that we are living out of context. As we struggle to preserve our rootedness against institutions of power and domination, in our isolation, we fall victim

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to the persuasion of a commoditized culture and mythical imagining of an unreal world. With an ever-increasing emphasis on media-created imaging and storytelling, we lose consciousness of our historical roots that grounds us in the living world. In our search for pleasure and ever-increasing opportunities to explore and reinvent ourselves, as a culture we have fallen prey to market-based relationships and priorities that prevent the renewal of interdependent connections with all earth's inhabitants that once existed.

The creation of the modern nation-state meant replacing old loyalties among local and neighboring communities with the concept of nationalism and a more abstract system of laws. Bauman (1995) warns that this system has now been so thoroughly rooted in our consciousness through ideology that we become self-monitoring and dominated by the hegemony of culture that places the attainment of objects above the human needs of people. Notions of working together collectively for the whole community have been replaced by ruthless competition and individual betterment. As we become preoccupied with ever more sophisticated forms of self-improvement, alteration, and fitness, we consent unwittingly to a culture of narcissism and greed.

This new *liquid modern life* (Bauman, 1995, 2000) is full of excess with an emphasis on individual pleasure, rights, and fulfillment within capitalist, market-based relations, leading many to believe in the myths that perpetuate fantasies of existing "fairness and equality" that do not exist. With this emphasis on individual identity, personal fulfillment, and pleasure, we end up surrendering to our own oppression. Surrendering, without contesting the actual powers that cause the marginalization of

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others as well as our own, we become disengaged by the variety of excesses, and, in turn, participate in and subconsciously consent to our own regulation.

When modern states began functioning more as ruling dynasties, communal customs, and rituals were redefined as backward elements of ignorance replaced by national unity and more homogenized cultural norms. The educational elites were recast as "guardians of the national heritage" (Bauman, 1995, p. 235). With the rise of a consumer—rather than producer—society, social relations began to be viewed through the lens of commodity market forces. As the seduction of the market has become central in the public domain, individual freedom and identity-formation have become *privatized.* The public is perpetually bombarded with contradictory and enticing offers of an ever-improving identity socially constructed to encourage more consumption and personal improvement.

Bauman traces these elements of the modern era that enforce the ordering of things through power and coercion, which is persuasively defined as a "frontier civilization." Re-creating this notion and perpetuating its own power meant force, coercion, and violence became a legitimized means to exploit new lands and people. Through what we call the process of civilization, we "make the coarse gentle, the cruel benign, the uncouth refined" (Bauman, 1995, p. 141).

The use of force becomes so legitimized that violence is viewed as normal and necessary. Legitimate force is what the state claims as necessary and therefore is not defined as violence, but rather as a planned, official ordering. Those who resist being conquered by *civilized forces* are viewed as violent barbarians, or as we refer to them

currently, simply as "terrorists," therefore legitimizing their annihilation. Bovard (2004) reports the death of approximately 500,000 Iraqi children due to U.S.–imposed sanctions during the first Gulf War is *justified* as saving future lives of people in "the civilized world." The murder of hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians in the current Iraq War and the millions of families made homeless becomes legitimate and justified as "collateral damage."

Bauman (1995) believes modern elites must be aware on some level of the master-slave dialectics between their own privilege and that of the masses. Their political and economic domination could only be maintained by "spiritual hegemony" (p. 39). A code of ethics reaching, steering, and embedded in the mass consciousness throughout the world allows for continued domination and control.

The semblance of morality, codified by ethical laws, becomes embedded in the public consciousness, along with a false notion of freedom of choice as a way to seduce people into believing they have control over their lives through their ability to choose between MacDonald's or Wendy's for dinner. But in the age of postmodern morality, outrage grows stronger—as the experience of one's oppression becomes more difficult to mask.

With a modernist view assuming *no morality without ethical law,* people adapt to the rules of society, which seemingly prevent the chaos we are taught to fear. But the notion that a "world without ethics is a world without morality" has enabled power-assisted ethical law to serve more as a "stiff cage that prevents those standards from

stretching to their true size and passing the ultimate test of both ethics and morality—that

of guiding and sustaining inter-human togetherness" (Bauman, 1995, p. 36–37).

Adiaphorization, Moral Disconnectedness

Bauman concurs with Emmanuel Levinas who believes the "justification of the

neighbor's pain is certainly the source of all immorality" (Levinas, 1988, p.163). Bauman

further elaborates that one would also have to accept that there is "more than a casual

connection between the ability to commit cruel deeds and moral insensitivity. To make

massive participation in cruel deeds possible, the link between moral guilt and the acts

which the participation entails must be severed" (Bauman, 1995, p. 148).

The principal tool of severing that connection is what Bauman terms

adiaphorization, the exclusion of certain phenomena from moral evaluation. Violence

has become almost monotonous in modern culture as increasingly gory and brutal

depictions dominate our entertainment-saturated culture. With a transition to the

obsession of individual identity formation, the social construction of identity becomes

a similar means of integrating *adiaphorization,* or moral disconnectedness, into the

public subconsciousness.

As humans are increasingly constructed as consumers and players, consciousness

continues to be severed from moral and social concerns. As we focus on individual

pleasure and consumption, as well as the magical thinking of advertising and media

constructions of reality, we become less and less aware of the surrounding world of suffering and environmental and economic devastation.

Bauman (1995) talks of a "splicing" of the life process into a series of fragmented and self-contained episodes, minus past and present consequences, resulting in fragmented and discontinuous human relationships. The lasting human webs of caring community networks sharing mutual responsibility and concern get pushed to the margins of our consciousness. This process further enables even the most intimate human interactions to be devoid of moral evaluation or judgment.

As more and more people remain outside the margins of public concern and responsibility, their irrelevance and absence in the public discourse represent a "silent, crawling, holocaust" (Bauman, 1995, p. 161). This enables U.S. citizens to stand by and witness horrible abuses of power by our own government—impacting others around the world—without moral indignation or concern. Many choose to remain silent about the things that matter most or, worse, deny the existence of such atrocities.

We have compartmentalized moral outrage and replaced it with fantasy dreams of individual self-fulfillment and ego gratification; we are living in a dream world of denial and self-delusion. We have become bystanders, similar to the German people who participated not only by their passive consent but also more directly out of fear to the horrors and atrocities committed against other human beings during the Holocaust. Similarly, in our current era with our comforts and tempered dialogues, we have become bystanders to the horrors of global repression, exploitation, and genocide.

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The Condition of Being Asleep

Jensen (2006) believes that from a young age we are acculturated to hate life, hate our bodies, hate and fear our emotions, hate each other, and hate ourselves. If we did not hate the world, we would not allow for its death and destruction before our eyes. We have become a culture of death. As Louis J. Guilette Jr. says, "we should be screaming in the streets" (p. 183).

Jensen (2006) speaks of the bedrock connection between psyche and reality, memory and experience. Jensen believes our willingness to forget becomes the essence of silencing. He asks his readers to consider how often our culture has committed and continues to commit genocide against every indigenous culture it encounters. As we consume products manufactured by others, do we stop to think about the atrocities committed against them to make our consumption possible?

As if subconsciously traumatized by the horrors of these atrocities, we spend a good deal of time numbing ourselves through consumption and other ego-gratifying pursuits to keep from remembering the unspeakable. It is as if by forgetting alone, we are able to make these truths go away. Jensen (2000, 2003, 2004) believes we live in a world of make-believe. This condition of being asleep—as part of our unconscious—becomes a process of becoming "normal" (R.D. Laing in Jensen, 2006).

We become deafened to the consequences of violence, the violence that is committed against others in the name of power, control, and greed. We become silenced by mythic fantasies of leading "a better way of life," something we have been led to

believe we are entitled to as members of the "free world." Jensen (2000) believes "for all our claims to rationality, we are, each and every one of us, as much out of our minds as we are out of our bodies" (p. 73).

Jensen reveals the deep cultural assumptions that persist and our seeming inability or unwillingness to remove our cultural eyeglasses. Without the distortion of the lens of a culture of competition, violence, consumption, and greed, we would be forced to see the physical reality before us. Without the constrictions and persuasions against removing these eyeglasses, we would be forced to see the inconceivable harm and destruction to which our blindness contributes.

The process of adapting ourselves to the witnessing and acceptance of unending violence against others and the destruction of our natural world is the process by which we become alienated and severed from our own moral instincts. Bauman terms this process as "adiaphorization," the normalization of violence as a means to achieve one's ends which legitimizes the education of our young into a culture of contempt, greed, and utter absurdity. Jensen asks his readers to consider a threshold beyond which we are no longer able to deny and ignore the destruction before us.

"We too must hurl ourselves against and through the literal and metaphorical concrete that contains and constrains us, that keeps us from talking about what is more important to us, that keeps us from living the way our bones know we can" (Jensen, 2000, p. 75). The urge to dominate is so prevalent in our culture that it will take a major shift in consciousness and ways of living in the world to sustain future life on this planet.

Just how we, as educators and community leaders, partake in this fundamental shift will hinge on our ability to begin to cut through all the clutter and noise to connect more deeply to each other and the natural world. Our success will depend on finding new ways to co-create the necessary bonds of community that will protect against the perpetuation of a culture that destroys life.

Hegemony of Market-Based Culture

The modern world has fewer institutionalized forms of collective moral thought and action, as privatization, deregulation, and alienated forms of identity continue to plague our current era. A collective process of creating common interests and concerns is required, not through debate and conquest but through open communication, dialogue, and democratic problem solving. The project of democracy seeks ways of honoring difference by creating open spaces where solidarity, mutuality, and trust are struggled with and forged over time.

Historically, as modernism and industrialization increased, so did the polarization and the cultural estrangement of the masses of people in the industrialized West primarily in Europe and the United States. As a result, the dominant classes were able to define themselves as the superior bearers of civilization and culture. Political, social, and economic domination became the project of cultural hegemony.

According to Antonio Gramsci (1971), hegemony describes the distinction between domination based on force and domination based on consent. To ensure

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continued domination, people in power—the minority—must convince the majority of people that their interests lay in capitalist, consumerist, and competitive social relations. We increasingly hear the term "in our interests" from corporate government and business leaders, implying that the needs of the market are also the needs of the people.

What gets lost in translation is that only a small number of people benefit from these relationships. The more we consent to the power of the almighty marketplace and its existing emphasis on the consumption of things rather than human connection and needs, the less we are able to perceive what is lost in the form of human and environmental connectedness. The more we consent, the less we are able to form intergenerational communities of mutual caring, responsibility, solidarity, sustainability, and joy. The more consent ruling groups have, the less coercion is needed.

Artz (2003) points to how the discourse of consumerism *delegitimates* our collective concern for community. Collective solidarity in political action and cultural expression could knock down the many barriers constructed by a competitive consumerist culture. These barriers maintain the divisions between people, competing with one another for rights and recognition rather than encouraging a democratic process of exchange, collaboration, and mutual participation.

Instead of a celebration of the rich diversity of cultural experiences and practices, our consciousness is saturated by corporate media constructions of a homogenized culture, which limits the texture and variation of the human experience. The potential for collective and collaborative consciousness to emerge out of our own rich cultural experiences is destroyed by the competing narratives of competition, consumerism and

denial "by uprooting social practices from their social ground and replacing them with artificially sweetened facsimile" (Artz, 2003, p. 24).

What process enables us to look the other way while so many others are suffering, or, worse yet, to deny their very existence? In his popular film *Advertising and the End of the World* (1998), media and cultural critic Sut Jhally wrote extensively about the social power of media and advertising in determining what a society values. Jhally argues that culture is the way societies tell stories about themselves and that we have increasingly allowed advertising and media conglomerates to become our culture's storytellers.

The core values that hold us together as a community—love, family, community, respect, and concern for one another, and our interdependence—have been pushed to the margins. In their place, advertising tells us stories that emphasize individual fulfillment, competition, and superficial short-term and episodic relationships. The result is that individual identity aspiration, sensation seeking, and lust for pleasure and ego-fulfillment permeate our hopes and dreams. Pushed to the margins are the possibilities of imagining communities of care, mutuality, love, and respect.

Jhally (1998) concurs with Jensen who argues that we are taught to believe in magic. Myths of happiness, excess, and fulfillment beyond anyone's dreams must be continually propagated and re-created to maintain our illusions of reasonable expectation. Gramsci (1971) describes this as establishing a certain type of "compromising equilibrium" among subordinate groups who consent to their own domination as long as some tangible material benefit is perceived.

Communities of Solidarity and Resistance

Shapiro (2006) urges that any attempt to address this crisis over consciousness and meaning must be concerned with the need for community. This was the overarching cultural context for so many of my generation who grew up in the turbulent times of the 1960s and '70s. We cared about the world and found community and shared meaning with others who came together in the streets and the meeting halls of unions and churches around the country. We developed a unity of purpose, a collective consciousness rooted in notions of social responsibility, care for the larger community and resistance toward systems of power, greed, and brutality.

We came together, sharing our deepest hopes and dreams for a better and more just world. We challenged the existing assumptions of a consumerist culture and celebrated diversity in all its wonderful manifestations. We resisted co-optation and struggled with each other over tactics, strategy, and the meaning of collective democratic leadership. We nurtured a sense of belonging to a community, intent on ending exploitation, war, greed, and indifference to the suffering of others. We possessed a sense of agency that our actions mattered.

As we formed the beginning stages of a more lasting counterweight to the imperial powers of perpetual war, greed, and consumption— ruling powers were also at work continually seeking to undermine our organization and consciousness. The power of the collective cultural stories arising from these movements became co-opted by embedded cultural stories of competition, self-aggrandizement and self-betterment. We

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developed an inability to tolerate disagreement, and ego-driven quests for influence and power too often became the norm. The persuasive hegemonic force of a socially constructed competitive, individualistic, and narcissistic culture won out. We internalized these cultural ways of knowing without an awareness of the destructive forces among us, which encouraged and justified contentious, competitive, and hierarchical behavior.

A critical reflection of past movements and streams of thought concerning social change must include a self-critical analysis of our own myths and blindness. Why is it that so many seem to cling to worn-out belief systems that no longer meet existing challenges? How could collective consciousness based on mutual hope and responsibility, with such a strong sense of agency and urgency in changing the world, become so stifled, fragmented, and warlike? Movements for social change split apart repeatedly over political theory and strategy, the need for control, and hierarchical ego-driven intolerance of diverse ways of thinking and knowing. This process continues to disrupt and circumvent our ability to construct effective long-term, counter-hegemonic blocs, or what feminist and religious thinker Sharon Welch (1985) defined as communities of solidarity and resistance.

Welch expresses her disillusionment with many of the political movements of the '60s and '70s in her recent book, *After Empire: The Art and Ethos of Enduring Peace* (2006). She witnessed the damage done by hierarchical social justice organizations that purged people from membership who had the courage to disagree with prevailing leadership. Rather than develop skills of collaboration, acceptance of difference and willingness to leave open the spaces of communication and diversity of thought, too often

organizations for social justice have internalized the values of a hierarchical culture of competition, egoism, intolerance for diversity of thought, and the need for certainty and control. Ideology becomes a weapon to condemn others who are not as ideologically *pure* as the self-chosen vanguard.

In assessing the overall crisis of humanity, Welch believes it is critically important to realize that "every person, movement, group and institution that I trust can be deeply, profoundly, tragically wrong … our best ideals can be used to justify cruelty and violence" (p. 10). Welch argues that injustice flourishes because those of us who love justice are lacking in creativity and humility, and too intent on holding onto past assumptions.

Many of us struggling for social justice became content to denounce the structures of power and control but unwilling to address our own complicity and ability to do harm. We were unable to recognize the ambiguity of our own actions, unable to recognize the dogma and myths we clung to, and unable to imagine different ways of understanding new possibilities. Too often we viewed other social justice activists as enemies because of disagreements over strategy and tactics alone. Welch emphasizes the importance of understanding the power to heal and to harm can be one and the same.

> What would it mean for political organizing if we began with the premise that our passion for justice is not our achievement but a gift? What if we realized that caring about injustice is not the result of our astute sociopolitical analyses, our compassion, our courage, and our will but is, rather the result of being loved, recognized and seen by others? Longing for justice and mourning and raging in the face of injustice are the gift of the ancestors, the gift of "all our relations." (Welch, 2004, p. 30)

Dualism: Us Versus Them

Sprenak (2004) speaks of the experience of non-duality as an awareness of the profound interconnectedness of life and accompanying sense of non-violence. She describes non-violent relationships as "evoking the richest possible unfolding of the person, not in an isolated, atomized way, but in relationship to the rest of the natural world" and surrounding community (p. 45). Rather than adhere to Western dualistic notions of right/wrong, good/evil, and black/white, non-dualistic approaches include more grounded, intertextual and interconnected understanding of critical issues.

While my return to academia after decades of working in local communities has been both exhilarating and life affirming, I am also deeply saddened by the highly competitive, individualistic, and exclusive values that pervade too many of our relationships in academia. There is so much emphasis on identity formation, "us versus them" discussions, finger-pointing over questions of privilege and oppression, competition over who is the most oppressed and who is the most responsible, and the use of guilt and shame rather than love and solidarity. As long as we have someone to blame, we do not have to think about our own complicity and accountability for the global crisis of human and environmental destruction.

Dualistic Western notions based on abstract, competing theories of identity formation seem to flood the halls of academia. People maintain warlike positions over the philosophy of ideas, influence, and power. Hoping to participate in a compassionate, active learning community committed to social *exchange* as well as change, I have been

disheartened to witness the self-serving cynicism, competitiveness, and divisiveness that prevent the formation of networks of mutually supportive and caring change agents.

Bowers (2001) has written extensively about our place in the world and the connections between culture, education, and the environment. He believes the politics of identity have contributed to our existing narcissistic, individualistic, and fragmenting culture as they focus on what divides us rather than on our potential to come together to heal past wrongs and move forward to more transformational change. Rather than focusing solely on individual rights and freedom, without an appreciation for and responsibility toward our physical world, we will crash and burn together as we duke it out to the last breath. With an exclusive emphasis on freedom and rights, we deny the freedom that "flourishes within the web of life" (Bowers, 2001, p. 8).

In *States of Grace: The Recovery of Meaning in the Postmodern Age* (1991), Spretnak discusses the phenomenon of "modernity" as a conceptual framework. She reviews two phenomena within the modernist trend that are obstacles to developing counter alternatives to our decline. The current "culture wars" perpetuated in academia and mainstream media continue to be conducted with the notion that there are separate solutions to social, political, and environmental problems.

Spretnak (1991) believes much of the recent "deconstructive postmodernist" ways of thinking have engaged many in academia with a nihilistic interpretation of the world broken into many separate fragments. Embedded in larger dynamics of disintegration, loss of meaning, and loss of collective concerns and awareness, we are missing a sense of groundedness. With an emphasis on discourse analysis and socially invented systems of

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meaning and perception, academic postmodern deconstruction leaves out an organic

understanding of the physical world, nature, and the cosmos. Worse yet, it sabotages our

responsibility to honor, protect, and preserve.

> In Western patriarchal societies where deconstructive postmodernism flourishes, deeply ingrained cultural norms of separateness, reactive autonomy, and self-absorption have devoured the sense of grounded, responsible being at the very moment we have finally realized that the destruction of our habitat may have passed the point of no return. (Spretnak, 1991, p. 15)

Spretnak believes we cannot solve our current crisis with the same kind of

reductionist and mechanistic thinking that led us to our current situation. She traces early

emancipatory movements of liberation and self-determination, based on the political

philosophy of the Enlightenment. When the "emancipatory vanguard" became

authoritarian, then free inquiry within liberation movements led to further questioning

and reaction against the foundations of modernity. Postmodernism developed in reaction

to these authoritarian tendencies. In each instance reactions against various imposed

constraints led to new forms of reactivity and much of the value of the preceding period

was destroyed.

Educators and social and ecological change agents must begin to understand what

is lost in our bold pursuit for "radical" change. Bold declarations of independence among

various political movements disregard the "older contours of wisdom" that are

incorporated and deftly preserved in other forms of substantive change (Spretnak, 1999).

We must begin to ask, "what do we want to preserve?" as well as "what do we want

to change?"

Bowers (2001) believes a linear view of progress based on past myths and contemporary thinking about liberation and emancipation "has led generations of progressive reformers to ignore the growing evidence of environmental destruction," and our responsibility to the earth (p. 4). Social justice discourses and advocacy too often leave out how human demands on the natural environment will affect the lives of future generations.

The premise that the individual is the primary political unit must be challenged in every sphere of life, most important throughout our educational system. Our greatest challenge as educators and community leaders is to understand how our own cultural assumptions, which prioritize individualist and human-centered perspectives, offer nationalistic, self-serving solutions, leaving off the physical needs of the majority of the world's people and the biosphere that is our home.

By becoming more self-reflective and less reactive, we can better understand how these assumptions are deeply embedded in our psyches. Jensen (2000) believes that, if we are to survive, we must become caretakers, guardians, trustees and nurturers of the earth.

Borders, Boundaries, and Separation

There are no simple solutions to the complex problems we face as human beings. We are nested in communities, and embedded in the natural world. We live on a planet that is at war with itself. As liquid modern life seems to be reeling out of control, Bauman

(2001) warns that there is an ever-increasing need to construct borders and boundaries around communities, provide security and keep others out.

When we hyper-separate ourselves from nature we become blind to the destruction of our natural world. Viewing the non-human world as separate, we are able to justify human domination and destruction as we lose our ability to feel and empathize with the non-human world. Plumwood (2002) believes our capacity to gain insight requires an understanding our own social and environmental context. We must develop the humility to learn from self-critical perspectives of the past, and recognize our own limitations of vision for creative change and survival.

As a collective community of care we have the potential to create a counterforce to the existing culture of violence, and narcissism, and self-aggrandizement at the expense of communal projects. The emphasis on individual and group identity, often based on rigid and essentialist notions of power and privilege, sabotages the collective power of solidarity and mutuality that is required to step up to the growing challenge of the universe.

Lacking this awareness, most social and educational change movements have internalized the norms of the dominant Western culture of hierarchy, chains of command, and hierarchical power and control. Worse yet, the needs of the marketplace determine what is worth knowing and how the curriculum is constructed to meet the ever-expanding needs of the market place. Without an examination of our relationships and behavior toward one another and to the earth community, the art of negotiation and mediation are viewed as unnecessary and impractical (Spretnak, p. 48). We unconsciously become

followers as a consequence of our inability to challenge each other and existing group norms effectively.

Paul Hawken (2007) speaks of the narcissism of small sectarian groupings imagining themselves as saviors. Too many organizations for social and environmental change seem incapable of crossing their own boundaries set up to maintain control. Too many departments within academia remain insular and unable to cross boundaries of related academic disciplines. This intolerance of diversity, especially diversity of thought, mutuality, and shared power, makes the creation of new relationships and new possibilities for expanding and creating complex webs of solidarity and trust all the more difficult.

The process of unrelenting social critique may be intellectually satisfying-but can also serve as a failure of intellect, creativity, and solidarity. To take the role of merely challenging and critiquing institutions of power by "speaking truth to power," we delude ourselves about our own power to do harm (Welch, 1999). By following determinist theories of social critique, many remove themselves from the responsibility of playing a constructive role *with* others, rather than against them to co-create together new possibilities.

Welch (2004) believes the dynamic of critique can itself become destructive. Many who have had to fight to reach certain levels of power can only feel relevant when they are embattled against an enemy. What happens when power differentials are changed? Finding identity and meaning exclusively from being in opposition makes it difficult to play a collaborative role in co-creating collective communities of care and

trust with others. To learn from the experience of others, it is necessary to be open and humble—attributes that are not alive and well in academic institutions or in many past movements for social change.

We can become destructive of new possibilities for social transformation by remaining in fixed, simplistic notions of power and privilege. By focusing on the power we don't have, rather than on the power we do have to co-create change *with* others, we can unwittingly end up playing destructive roles, which perpetuates outdated frameworks of meaning that do not recognize new, more complex and intercultural power differentials, relationships, and possibilities.

Fiske (1992) believes the social spaces where we live and develop our social identities, habits of thought, and tastes are "multidimensional maps of the social order" (p. 155). Rather than view practices and identities as fixed, separate categories in some sort of hierarchically determined scale to be asserted and fought for, Fiske views the practices and identities of people as interactive and fluid, as they mutually inform each other through "transgressions of categorical boundaries" (p. 155).

A more complex and inter-textual understanding of power emphasizes our ever-changing social relationships, requiring challenging and dynamic adaptation and self-monitoring. No one is immune to abuses of power and brutality toward others. The potential to create lasting eco-social networks of creativity, solidarity and reciprocity is made possible by an awareness of our own potential for error and harm (Welch, 1999).

Welch (1999) believes the moral problem is not evil, both within and among people. We must be responsive and responsible in relation to each other and with the

environment that supports us. By appreciating the richness of our differences, we are better able to embrace diversity in all its forms as a necessity to creating mutual solidarity and trust. Self-deluding certainty with fixed, safe, compartmentalized notions of right and wrong leads to complacency in the face of the urgency of our times. We need the vision and experience of others to see where our own views are partial or just plain wrong (Welch, p. 63).

"What is most harmful resides within us, the accumulated wounds of the past, the sorrow, shame, deceit, and ignominy shared by every culture, passed down to every person, as surely as DNA, a history of violence and greed" (Hawken, 2007, p. 190). This is our challenge for future generations. What is required of us is to create lasting intergenerational networks of mutuality and trust, love and forgiveness, reciprocity and accountability, including a welcoming of others in all their strangeness, reactivity, and unique cultural ways of knowing.

Welch describes a new model of diversity training that encourages mutual accountability for our multiple identities and a recognition of the ways in which we all use and abuse power. It is essential to acknowledge and understand that there are power differentials between us as individuals and as members of the diverse groups we represent. It takes courage to recognize of the complexity of systemic power imbalances and to explore our own abuse of power. In non-hierarchical and mutually accountable communities, we can discover *with* others how to learn from difference and conflict to co-create interconnected enduring webs of solidarity and resistance.

Hierarchy and Reductionist Thinking

Val Plumwood (2002) in her book *Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crisis of Reason,* believes our current devastation is the result of a human- and reason-centered culture—now more than a couple of millennia old—that has become blind to our fundamental ecological relationships. She calls for a deep and comprehensive restructuring of culture that is able to reestablish our connectedness to the earth community, which has been destroyed by technology and hierarchical relationships.

Plumwood supports a counter-hegemonic program rooted in ethics and philosophy of mind. By analyzing anthropocentrism or human centeredness as "the otherization of nature" one is better able to understand the way "human superiority, reason and mastery" serve as a "centric analysis that excludes the non-human world" (Plumwood, p. 9). Human movements and people focused on liberation and freedom miss their own authoritarian arrogance toward the non-human world. With a focus on one's freedom *from* rigidly determined phenomena, hyper-separation continues as well as a lack of humility toward others *for* whom we are justly responsible.

The modern global market economy, as a hegemonic system, privileges abstract knowledge over contextual and experiential ways of knowing. Economic rationalism, economism, laissez faire economics and economic fundamentalism contribute to subordinate social and environmental life to the needs of the capitalist marketplace.

A universal formula is imposed on local and global relations, which accepts the abstract, rationalist needs of the market above all else. Separate challenges to

"government control," white or male domination and other forms of domination do not
address the core challenge of human domination over the land and our natural resources
and the control of the global market of all our relations. Our greatest challenge, according
to Plumwood, is to replace hierarchical, human-centered, and mechanistic models of
change with more mutually communicative and responsive models that clearly honor a
partnership with the earth and its inhabitants.

Creative Disequilibrium

This thesis explores the crisis of globalization and the resulting fragmentation of
communities, which has created a culture of violence, disconnection, destruction, and
death. I believe new emerging cultures and ways of knowing and learning are expressing
the creative potential of human beings to seek harmony through an organic connection to
the earth and all of earth's peoples. Many believe we are at a zeitgeist moment in time.
The urgency to act is expectant with possibility.

Alternative collective communities are appearing outside of the narrow
ideologically driven communities of the same based on certainty and the need to control
others' beliefs. People are finding more creative non-binary modes of relating to one
another outside of socio-hierarchical and categorical relationships that isolate us from
each other and our natural world. New ways of socially and ecologically relating are
beginning to form with a radical openness to learning from each other, outside of

categorical assumptions and ways of knowing that reject the possibility of solidarity and trust.

Hawken (2007) believes what separates us becomes less and less important. What brings us together is becoming increasingly critical. The artificial concepts and constructions of identify formation, which maintain our separation from each other and the natural world, are becoming irrelevant. We are seeing the end of "isms" as we move away from the world created by power and privilege to a world *created* by community, our connections to each other *and* the land. What keeps us divided and pushes us apart— maintaining war-like positions of power, privilege, and categories of oppression—works to maintain the power of the few over the many.

Famed environmental writer and cultural historian Thomas Berry, in an interview with Jensen (2007), believes we must learn to appreciate the need for *creative disequilibrium*. Berry believes there are two basic forces in the universe: differentiation and bonding.

Differentiation is about pushing things apart and making them different. Bonding is about is about bringing things together and helping them become alive to each other. If differentiation could overcome bonding, then the universe would disperse with nothing to hold it together. If bonding were to overcome differentiation, then it would collapse. But if differentiation and bonding enter into equilibrium, things become fixated. Berry believes the only "viable option of the universe is for it to be in a state of creative disequilibrium, holding together sufficiently to not fall apart, but open enough to be expanding" (Jensen, 2007, p. 50).

Berry believes what is needed to get us out of such excessive disequilibrium is to establish more viable patterns of activity for the whole earth community. The basic right to exist, live in a natural habitat, and fulfill one's role in the ever-renewing process of nature and the universe are the governing principles that will determine our ability to survive as a planet.

Re-creating the commons as a reciprocal community in which basic resources are shared equitably and all beings are respected and cherished requires a major shift in thinking about democracy and our ability to prioritize future work. In Chapter II, I address the multiple theoretical and epistemological approaches that ground my work, including an understanding of systems approaches to co-creating collective communities of solidarity, reciprocity and mutual care.

As the gap widens between rich and poor and the suffering worsens, and as we witness unending war and global environmental devastation, we are also witnessing a growing awareness of the need to participate in collective action to halt the path toward death and destruction. Millions of people around the globe are acting on their awareness of the current decline.

A fierce urgency is emerging on a world scale to address the challenges that lie ahead to heal and repair the earth while resolutely focusing on creating future projects that have the capacity to alter the core structures of empire and power. Creating a world of mutuality and trust with a collective concern for the core community values that hold us together is a gift of all our ancestors, of "all our relations" (Welch, 2004, p. 30).

The work of the world is common as mud
Botched, it smears the hands, crumbles to dust.
But the thing worth doing well done
Has a shape that satisfies, clean and evident
Greek amphoras for wine or oil,
Hopi vases that held corn, are put in museums
But you know they were made to be used.
The pitcher cries for water to carry,
And a person for work that is real.
(Piercy, 1989, p. 106)

CHAPTER II

ALL OUR RELATIONS

The human body with its various predilections is, to be sure our *own* inheritance, our own rootedness in an evolutionary history and a particular ancestry. Yet it is also our insertion in a world that exceeds our grasp in every direction, our means of contact with things and lives that are still unfolding, open and indeterminate, all around us. (David Abram, 1996, p. 50)

In the summer of 2001, I was on a hiatus from decades of teaching and community-based work to study, reflect, and renew. I had left my home in sunny California to study within an interdisciplinary program in Family Studies in Florida. It was a year of retreat and renewal, and I felt a sense of urgency to devote my time to exploring issues that were deeply troubling and crying out for new alternatives.

My most recent job had been working with foster children who had been taken from their families because of abuse and neglect and placed in temporary foster homes. Many of "my clients" had lived in seven homes before the age of 15; others, five homes before the age of 6. They kept their belongings in plastic bags or a temporary set of drawers or boxes so it would be easier to pack up and move on to their next home if things didn't "work out."

These children and their families were caught in a horrible cycle of neglect, poverty, and recycled despair. I knew the level of care provided could not begin to address the *systemic* issues of poverty, joblessness, marginalization, and desolation

suffered by an ever-expanding number of children and families all over the world. In the wealthiest country in the world, how is it that we turn our backs and look the other way in light of such increasing devastation?

During my work experience as an educator, social worker and community organizer, I developed an understanding of the interrelated crises of poverty, war, genocide, and, more recently, the devastation of the earth. Equally critical is the lack of citizen participation in search for creative, alternative solutions. At this juncture in my life, I sought further understanding of the root crisis of leadership at all levels of society, and how these issues interrelate and function systemically. I returned to school to determine what future role I could play to support an intergenerational revitalization. After completing my master's work in Family Studies, I decided to further my studies in a doctoral program at UNCG. There were so many more questions I wanted to explore.

The complexity and urgency of the crisis described in Chapter I cry out for a radical shift in our ways of knowing and understanding our most urgent critical tasks as educators, citizens, and community leaders. How can we begin to resolve the interrelated crisis of poverty, war, the devastation of the earth, greed and materialism, and the resulting indifference and disconnection that seems to permeate human consciousness? What are the larger systemic issues rooted in historical, cultural, and ecological understanding?

What does it mean to transform our own ways of knowing and envisioning future tasks given the emerging reality of local and global destruction? Why do so many people look the other way in numbing denial and unintentional consent by contributing to the

current devastation of our natural and human world? How do we break through determinist, compartmentalized and dualistic patterns of thinking that perpetuate division and separation over creativity, reconciliation, and transformation? What is required to create a deep and comprehensive restructuring of culture to create deeply egalitarian and paraticipatory living democracy?

The events of September 11 jolted me wide-awake as I watched in disbelief the images of two towers erupting in explosion and screaming people leaping from buildings to their deaths. At that moment, I realized that the people of the world suffering from the colonization and destruction of their land, homes, and resources had finally had enough. The impact of what the CIA termed "blowback" was finally right in our faces and consciousnesses—on our TV screens 24–7. The world "as we knew it" would never be the same.

As I listened to the mainstream media's gradual narrowing of the discourse, it struck me that the story being woven by the media left out the multiple ways of understanding the diverse historical and cultural contexts surrounding this event. Clearly the attack on the world trade centers was a deplorable act, but in order to understand the complexity of this event it is critical to view what happened before and the role of the U.S. government in supporting acts of war and terror against the rest of the world. What actions had the U.S. government taken before 9/11 to affect a large majority of the world's people, who have themselves been terrorized by war, imperial power and global destruction? How does the continual bombardment and destruction of homes and villages all over the globe affect the people of the world and the survival of the planet? How is it

that nations have become so adept at thinking exclusively about their our own individual, familial and nationalist context and blind to the suffering of others?

In Chapter I, I discuss the consequences of living in a violent culture of worldwide destruction, disconnection, denial and death, and the complex struggle to reach out with others to build new communities of solidarity, mutuality, and trust. In a world of reactivity, hatred and deception, the problems we face require new ways of understanding and envisioning our emerging tasks. It requires a deeper understanding of the interrelated and diverse social, historical, cultural, and environmental contexts that root our ways of knowing and experiencing the world. Dualistic and one-dimensional solutions that do not take into consideration the complexity and multiple layers of context, including our physical environmental context, have become more glaringly insufficient.

How do we go about re-imagining and re-creating compassionate communities of solidarity, mutuality, and trust that deligitimate a culture of destruction and denial? How do we best support our ability to imagine new and creative alternatives to our current destructive path? How do we best celebrate what Thomas Berry termed creative disequilibrium, the necessary tension between differentiation and bonding, "holding together sufficiently to not fall apart, but open enough to be expanding" (Berry in Jensen, 2002 p. 50).

> Creativity. Play. There is a difference between a philosopher and a poet. Philosophers look for equilibrium. Poets delight in a teasing disequilibrium, in the interplay of tension among all beings. (Berry in Jensen, 2002, p. 3)

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Berry (in Jensen, 2002) prioritizes understanding the *roots* of our crisis. He speaks of the age of industrialization as the beginning of a great shift away from indigenous, traditional ways of relating to the world to one of mindless extraction, consumption and individualism. Berry believes at this particular moment in time, a major shift is required that involves both a critical understanding of the destruction of the earth and a move from human-centered ways of knowing to the development human/earth relationships (Berry, 1999).

In this chapter, I describe the multiple methodological approaches and theoretical frameworks of meaning that interrelate and ground my work to form a web of *ways of knowing*, learning, and practice that sheds light on our most crucial work ahead. I address new, less *determinist* ways of understanding the world by using an imaginative research approach that celebrates interdisciplinary and *intersubjective* ways of knowing as forms of knowledge that "exist in a perpetual state of self-alteration" (Kenway & Fahey, 2009, p. 11).

In this complex world, my goal is not to propose a single theory, set of theories or program for resolving our current crises. My goal is to celebrate the *intertextuality* of lived experience and explore how we make meaning authentically and collectively to create inclusive, compassionate, and sustainable communities. I am most concerned with the relationships that lead to the greatest possible unfolding of *what it means to be human* (Berry, 1999) in a world gone mad with consumption, denial and greed. What forms of

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collective action, grounded in mutual understanding, will best propel us forward to create

sustainable alternatives to globalized destruction?

Martucewicz (2001) talks about learning to love the questions as a matter of

learning to learn and learning to feel at ease in the uncertainty, anxiety, and responsibility

that is nurtured when we struggle with problems of ethics and care for the world.

> If we stand, waiting on this edge, something happens: a question, an idea, or a word
> that touches, stabs, caresses, burns. Something to propel us toward an answer. If we
> turn away, we turn away from the care of the world, and ultimately, ironically,
> tragically from the care of ourselves. (Martusewicz, 2001, p. 69)

Martusewicz argues that autobiographical work is a way of understanding the

questions that emerge from one's own life experience and history and the cultural

processes from which those experiences are shaped. By exploring my own historical,

cultural, and ecological context for my explanation of the world, I have chosen a semi-

autobiographical approach to ground my exploration in my own living context. I share

my personal story of the struggle, fear, courage and joy of becoming a more fiercely

engaged human being, compassionate educator and community organizer—as a way to

understand my own living context and growing intercultural consciousness.

As an educator and activist, I am most interested in the catalyzing experiences

that have the potential to ignite a fundamental change in consciousness, agency, and

imaginative possibilities. By exploring the ambiguities as well as the synergy of life

experience, this process of writing enables the reader to understand the interrelationship

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between particular memory, shared experience, and the necessity of developing

collectivity and connection *with* others working for sustainability and survival.

Going Deeper

During the process of writing this dissertation, I lost my wonderf**u**lly loving

father, who suffered from Alzheimer's disease and other complications of aging over a 6-

year period. There were so many critical moments, including his death, that interrupted

my writing, forcing me to go deeper into my heart and soul to question what matters most

and what I *feel in my bones* to be most critical to communicate with others. Referring

back to a family system approach used in my work as an Early Intervention coordinator, I

realized how one ill family member could cause so much disintegration, grief, anger,

competition, and distrust.

The fragmentation of my own family highlighted for me the importance of

understanding how critical it is to honor the family system as a whole, appreciating how

the parts fit together, split apart, and form smaller groupings, antagonisms and warlike

behavior. Transferring systems thinking to a global scale, this thesis explores more

holistic, ecological approaches to understanding the interrelated crisis of our times.

Rather than focus on one single problem and search for cause and blame, a systems

approach searches for interrelated phenomena that impact each other and require the

development of reciprocity, love, openness, and mutual responsibility and care.

Throughout my work is a yearning for greater understanding, respect, and mutuality that can only develop when *we are all accountable* for the many ways the whole system fails to protect, nurture, and sustain life. As a culture, we seem driven to find blame in others who are different than ourselves and fixed on perpetuating fantasies of denial and neglect that preclude our own accountability for the whole of life. We seek safety and security in the borders and boundaries we construct to keep "others" out, closed to other ways of knowing that threaten our security and need for certainty.

This chapter is about shifting from the many ways we separate, exclude, divide, and categorize meaning that prevent our insertion into a world gone mad with desire, denial, disconnection, and contempt. The gift of slowing down my research to support my father in the last stages of life has enabled me to feel more profoundly the "deepest grief of the shattering of the world" (Hawken, 2007, p. 29), while absorbing the rich lessons from others about the critical work that lies ahead.

In my father's last days and weeks, he found such joy being in nature, feeding the birds, collecting piles and piles of shells on the beach, and giving them to others, especially young children as gifts. It was his way of passing on his love and wisdom. One night we were walking on the beach and he threw off his clothes and jumped into the bay and swam out to as far as he could go. He was filled with such exuberance for life and all its sensory pleasures as his brain was wracked with confusion and loss. What kept him alive were his emotional connections with a large family of children, grandchildren and a life partner, my mother, who loved him deeply, and the sensual wonders of the sun and sand, the rustling of the waters, and the sheer delight of feeding the birds.

Kathleen Dean Moore (2008) speaks of how critical are our connections to the natural world. The richer our experience in the natural world, the richer will be our experience with others around us. She asks what are our *holdfasts?* What are the structures of connection that hold us together? "How will we cling to what we value most, the values that sustain us" (p. 204)?

Throughout the process of my research, I developed a renewed sense of awe and wonder for the earth that nurtures and feeds us and of the necessity of its inclusion in all ways of knowing, thinking, and exploring our most pressing tasks. As I researched and wrote, I planted a garden, helped my mother care for my father, taught an undergraduate class in the foundations of education, and worked within the local community with others on peace, justice, and sustainability issues. The interconnection of mind and body, self and nature, and self with others was a necessary practice for me to heal my grief and work in community while attempting to explore collectively our most challenging tasks for future regenerations.

It is my hope that this thesis will contribute toward greater clarity of purpose for future generations and offer a more mutual, organic, and intergenerational consensus of mounting challenges. A relational process of writing becomes a way of unfolding, as my evolving consciousness adjusts with a more heightened awareness of my own rootedness and interconnections within the earth community that is my home.

Imaginative Research

Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of *heteroglossia* refers to an intermingling of different voices, cultures, language groups, and ways of knowing. It's understood as a "perpetual linguistic and intellectual revolution," which guards against any single truth or "official language" (Clark & Holquist, 1984, p. 22). My own research imagination is guided by the idea of a more open, energizing, and generative unfolding and meshing of past, present, and emerging theories and forms of knowledge.

In their book *Globalizing the Research Imagination*, Kenway and Fahey (2009) discuss the necessity of employing a number of diverse theoretical approaches that transgress the narrow disciplinary spaces in which we are encouraged to think about knowledge and epistemology. Imaginative research can be mobilized to develop "defiant global imaginations and communities with capacities to think" and live differently in a world where research is increasingly governed by *reductionist* rationality (p. 11).

Many researchers attempt to definitively describe *the* world through a process of discovering facts, which enable them to make politically neutral observations and recommendations about "objective" knowledge and truth. This approach to research can lead to rigid and linear formulas that selectively perceive new information through old and categorical assumptions. Knowledge becomes homogenized and reified, frozen into fixed phenomena. The ability to imagine new ways of living and thinking becomes impossible.

Kenway and Fahey refer to Greek/French philosopher, economist, and psychoanalyst Cornelius Castoriadis who was critical of forms of reductionism and determinism that condense thought to simple frameworks to be supported rather than to inspire the researcher to move beyond inherited ways of thinking to develop a socio-historical imagination. Castoriadis explored *relationships* between multiple truths, reason, ways of knowing, and experience.

The authors describe a post-positivist approach, which allows for re-imagining research in a diverse and changing "social-historical" world, as capable of inspiring a radically interdisciplinary *range* of ways of knowing and understanding experience. This approach provides a self-reflective process whereby the researcher becomes a philosopher, critically thinking and rethinking existing notions while re-imagining new and unprecedented ways of thinking about the world.

In this chapter I utilize a semi-autobiographical approach that begins with the questions of my own life history while searching for patterns and connections to larger socio-political, ecological and cultural theories. Moving between an exploration of my own historical context and the rich cultural, philosophical and theoretical texts explored in my research facilitates a greater understanding of the broader questions I pose for the larger world. As I move between my life experience as an educator and community activist, my place within academic institutions, and the relationship between theory and practice, and lived experience—I am attempting to find patterns of continuity that will enlighten future work.

Throughout the process of researching the most ominous public issues and persistent problems, we are able to explore the interrelationship between history and biography, theory and practice— to imagine future creative and ethical possibilities (Kenway & Fahey, 2009). Exploring political, sociological, ethical and ecological systems I seek to develop emerging epistemological and pedagogical possibilities that address the crisis of economic fundamentalism and moral disconnectedness at its core.

By meshing past, present and emerging theories with my own storied life, my goal is to uproot what gets in the way of creating a major shift from empire building to inspiring mutually responsible communities of care. The world of imagination can be seen as the world of the senses—outside the world of linear logic and fixed reasoning. I search for processes and skills that have the potential to shape and refine what can be done to renew and recreate a more loving, less violent world.

Qualitative research includes an exploration of holistic and ecological approaches to understanding interrelated phenomena. My aim is to create intersections between the questions that arise from my life and the broader questions of the meaning of democratic practice expanded to include all Earth beings. In this chapter I explore the intertextuality of meaning and systems approaches to investigating phenomena.

Later in this chapter, I discuss an understanding of the body as a source of non-linguistic and non-cognitive knowledge. The perpetuation of human/reason-centered, hyper-separated epistemologies that greatly reduce our ability to empathize with the non-human world will also be explored (Plumwood, 2002).

Intertextuality of Language and Meaning

In her ground-breaking work *I Answer with My Life*: *Life Histories of Women Teachers Working for Social Change* (1993), Kathleen Casey traces the stories of women teachers who were also committed politically, personally and professionally to issues of social justice by analyzing the patterns and similarities between their voices and experiences. As an educator and social activist struggling to combine the personal, political and spiritual, Casey's (1993) narratives closely parallel much of my own life experience.

Casey's framework of narrative study includes the concept of the *intertextuality* of multiple stories and narratives. Moving away from dominant stories or "myths" of reality that create hegemonic consent, Casey explores the many competing versions of stories of "activist" women teachers from diverse religious, cultural, and historical backgrounds. She examines how we see similarly, yet differently, and the importance of the *particular* and collective experience that roots the particular within a historical context. She referred to Bakhtin's theory of relational analysis, speaking of the intertextuality of language, experience, and meaning (pp. 20–28).

A monumental work by Morson & Emerson (1990) clarifies many of Bakhtin's main ideas that were written over the course of 50 years from 1919 to the early 1970's when he had become a cult figure in the post-Stalinist Soviet Union. They describe a man deeply concerned with ethics and responsibility, discourse and language, semiotics and poetics, creative understanding and joyful connectivity.

According to Morson & Emerson (1990), Bakhtin warned that language is too often used as analytic categories mistaken for social facts. He was concerned about the oppressive nature of monologue and believed everyday language of various social groups and the diverse languages of numerous professional groups differentiated our ways of knowing and thinking.

In celebrating the life histories of women teachers, Casey (1993) dispels many of the common stereotypes created by dominant discourse as her participants create and tell their own stories. They became the authors of their own life experience, thereby providing counter narratives to the dominant and prevailing interpretations of meaning about women teachers.

While language is about the way we make meaning, Casey (1993) argued that politics is about the relationship *between* diverse worldviews. Relationship and context are multilayered. My focus is about the interrelationships of how we make meaning between people and cultures, the particular and collective, and between humans and the natural world. The reduction of cultural life to a static system of categorical relationships prevents an understanding of the diverse and competing critical factors in intercultural exchanges and the reciprocity required by all to co-create alternatives.

According to Morson and Emerson (1990) Bakhtin emphasized the value of everyday life experience as a primary source of developing responsibility and creativity. It is through our *experience* of being in the world that influences our ways of knowing, thinking, and living. He spoke of "non-monologic unity" as an essential component of creativity and of the "labyrinth of linkages" among one's own ideas and those of others

(Morson & Emerson, 1990, pp. 2–9). In the process of "becoming," he believed in the unfinalizability of life and the unity of emerging ideas as they unfold. Bakhtin stressed "an eternal harmony of unmerged voices" as a new wholeness of human experience (Tenaka, 2003, p. 46).

Bakhtin understood language systems as temporary and emphasized the *changeability* of meaning. At the heart of his epistemology was the need to temper individualism with forms of collectivity. He understood dialogue as a form of communication *between* simultaneous differences. Bakhtin preferred the kind of insights that were featured in novels—the understanding that "becoming" is taken into consideration, which allows for ideas to evolve and change "and struggle against a background that is active in shaping life" (Morrison & Emerson, 1990, p. 9).

Religious and Women's Studies writer, Sharon D. Welch (1999) describes the codes and modes of discourse through which we engage difference. She asks: How do we shape our lives when we realize the very structures of agency, ways of knowing, and imagination, are shaped by complex and contradictory forms of discourse? How do we move forward while maintaining a respect and appreciation for the complex and varied ways people are situated historically by place and culture? What would it mean if knowledge were understood as wisdom that evolves from our participation in a larger ecological system?

I believe that as we reflect historically, culturally, and ecologically within *fluid* systems of meaning, we become more open to the possibility of re-imagining a world infused with creativity, mutuality, reciprocity and love. The Western world, which

increasingly prioritizes market-based relations, celebrates the individual pursuit of pleasure without regard for its effects on others.

Later in this chapter I expand on notions of collective consciousness, and *collaborative intelligence* as "a complex interactive system" where diverse elements are understood in relationship to one another (Martusewicz, 2009, p. 254). Developing a stronger consciousness of our own unique historical and cultural context enhances awareness of the *collective* context—both conscious and unconscious—that surrounds the particular and embeds us in the larger world.

Bridging Theory and Practice

In chapter IV I include the voices of my students to elucidate the reciprocity of the teaching/learning experience and to provide a rich textured understanding of my theoretical inquiry. The educational narratives of students experience within and outside the classroom walls bridge private and collective ways of knowing, including diverse intercultural, intergenerational and intersubjective relations.

My search for what is possible to involve, engage and inspire future generations to join in re-prioritizing our just obligations to each other and the all earth *others* is enriched by the reflective narrative experiences of my students. Including student voice and reflection bridges theory and practice, action and reflection in an openly dialogic process that highlights my pedagogical struggle to facilitate greater eco-ethical and participatory consciousness.

In order to involve human participants in my study, I followed the guidelines of the Institutional Review Board receiving approval from The Office of Research Compliance at UNCG. To protect human participants great care was taken to maintain confidentiality, updating and maintaining informed consent documents that were kept on file in locked cabinets in my home.

I utilized self-reflective practice and reflections of students from four semesters of teaching The Foundations of Education class to undergraduate students, the majority who were education majors and future teachers in North Carolina. I sought to explore pedagogical practices that contribute to stronger intergenerational and intercultural relations, and what pedagogical strategies best inspire greater solidarity, mutuality, civic engagement, and trust.

Throughout each semester students were required to write twelve reflections on course readings, classroom discussion and personal thoughts related to critical educational topics. On the last day of class, after a short introduction about my research project, students were introduced to a 3rd party student colleague who facilitated their potential consent to participate in my research project. Students were presented with a UNCG approved consent form to act as human participants and assured their participation would in no way effect their grades. Their participation was kept confidential until after their grades had been submitted to them electronically. Soon afterward the consent forms were delivered to me and follow up was made to obtain copies of past reflections.

Attempts were made to include a broad cross section of students from diverse backgrounds including students who had difficulty relating to the material presented. Rather than seek to predict or determine causal relations, my focus is on the intertextuality of language, experience and consciousness by including illuminating accounts of student reflections that exemplify their rich cultural contexts and living experience. I sought to record any deep structural shifts in basic premises, thoughts and beliefs that students experienced during the semester that could highlight effective pedagogical practices to renew and reaffirm collaborative democratic communities of care.

Eco-Ethical Consciousness

Throughout the process of writing this thesis, I've struggled to free myself from reductionist, mechanistic ways of thinking about the world to more open, ecological epistemologies sparked by the promise of re-imagining and re-creating the *cultural and ecological commons* as best described by eco-educators Chet Bowers (2001, 2005, 2006) and Rebecca Martusewicz (2006, 2009); environmental leaders Vandana Shiva (2005), Paul Hawken (2007), Val Plumwood (2002), Thomas Berry (1999), and Derrick Jensen (2000, 2002, 2008); and many other global ecological thinkers included in my research.

Martusewicz and Edmundson (2004) argue for a process of education that requires an understanding of how we live just and sustainable lives on this planet without continuing to destroy what makes life possible. By exploring *what is education for*, an

eco-justice framework of understanding seeks to engage in developing new patterns of attention toward each other and the biosphere. Viewing diversity as a *generative force* and motivating factor in all life systems affirms and enriches the creative power in the web of life.

The authors discuss pedagogy of responsibility that grows from understanding principles of eco-justice. I search for a rebalancing of human cultural politics with the rich eco-social system of the sensual and physical world. An eco-justice framework of meaning allows for the development of an *eco-ethical consciousness* in with greater focus on pedagogy of responsibility and care before considering pedagogy of liberation. An eco-justice framework is ethical and political, spiritual, and ecological. It encompasses, deepens, and critiques social justice thinking—recognizing that human cultures are nested within and interdependent upon larger life systems.

Alone, pedagogy of liberation prioritizes modernist assumptions about the myth and value of anthropocentric individualism. It perpetuates dualistic and hierarchical perspectives that value separation, rigid categorical thinking, and reified dogmas isolated from pedagogies of care and responsibility toward all of life.

> good teaching within an eco-justice framework has as its goal examining when to challenge not just the economic but cultural and ecological status quo, and when conserving particular traditions, practices, and beliefs is necessary to revitalize a sustainable community. (Martusewicz & Edmundson, 2004, p. 7)

In my attempts to bridge multiple theories and practices, I discuss my shared history among others of my generation who became global activists against war, poverty

and discrimination and what it means to go beyond where we get stuck. I seek to identify

ways of knowing, teaching and learning that are accountable to the complexity and

multiplicity of the critical issues that overwhelm and haunt us and prevent effective

collaborative collective action.

Cultural and political theoretician Antonio Gramsci (1971) talked about the

organic unity of the living as a human phenomenon. Present global writers and thinkers

are expanding on this notion to include other cultural ways of knowing that incorporate

the natural systems in which we are embedded.

I believe a shift in thinking from linear cause and effect as a target of analysis to a

more open, co-emergent process of interrelated living systems of understanding holds the

greatest promise for creating a process of "collaborative intelligence" and collective

action capable of providing alternatives to the existing crisis. My research draws on

historical notions of the commons that emphasize our relations with each other and our

natural world community—our relationships to place and other living beings, both

bioregional and cultural.

An ecological perspective includes pedagogy of responsibility that exists in

creative disequilibrium *with* pedagogies of liberation and critique. Martucewicz and

Edmundston (2004) urge that we consistently ask "to what and whom are we justly

responsible" (Martusewicz & Edmundson, 2004, p. 84). Understanding our just

obligations to the whole cultural and environmental commons and to each other allows

for a greater understanding of reciprocity, interdependence and solidarity *with* others. The

effects of market fundamentalism, including the process of colonization of the global

south, and the unequal distribution of wealth is essential to an understanding of the process of prioritizing local struggles for rights and recognition.

Developing an eco-ethical consciousness is about recognizing all our relations, *with* each other and the land, trees, and sky that nurture and sustain our lives. Without this recognition and commitment, I believe our response to the expanding world crisis will remain insufficient. A more specific exploration of the cultural and ecological commons as expressed by environmental leader and physicist Vandana Shiva (2005) as *Earth Democracy* is addressed in Chapter III. The broad questions of pedagogy and the reproduction of knowledge are addressed in Chapter IV.

Rootedness

Shapiro (2006), in his book *Losing Heart*, talks of creating spaces where our rootedness to our pasts are affirmed and how our sense of connectedness to the land and community can protect, conserve, and nurture our relationships to each other while nurturing a sense of belonging to communities of solidarity, trust, and social action. The process of recovering and preserving our own unique cultural inheritance, while connecting to present and future work, enables us to become more adept at creating a vision of future possibilities that become more generative.

The ability to make meaning from real-life experience serves to preserve particular truths from being interpreted through the dominant lens of pre-determined

beliefs and ideas. This also roots us within a rich cultural heritage that challenges the homogenization of a market-based culture.

We live in diverse places that root us in real-life experience with the physical places we call home. By developing an understanding of our own rootedness, we are far more capable of intuitively understanding who we are and of our historic task *in our bones*.

Kincheloe and Pinar (1991) discuss the nature of the significance of place and the history that lives within us as a way of bringing the particular into an understanding of embedded social forces. Without a grounded view of the world in which education takes place, our experience becomes fragmented bits of trivial knowledge and the political effects of our process are obscured (p. 5). An understanding of place sensitizes

> one to those elements that make a community unique; its natural setting with those places, for example, where one likes to be when the sun sets, the webs of friendship, and those kinship ties that would be impossible to reproduce elsewhere. (p. 12)

The authors (Kincheloe & Pinar, 1991) believe a "synergism occurs when the rhythms of time and fleeting glimpses of the unconscious are integrated with a knowledge of place to reveal hidden designs" (p. 8). A historical dimension of place enables us to understand the interconnected meanings and particularities of the social landscape and the people and other living things that inhabit them.

Understanding our rootedness to the past helps us realize and appreciate the struggles of others before us and how the past remains within us as a reminder of who we are and the possibilities of who we can become. Bowers (2006) believes that by

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recovering and preserving of our pasts, we have a greater ability to create a vision of what is possible.

> More advanced study of cultural continuities (traditions) should lead to the examination of the ideological roots of widely held misconceptions about the nature of tradition—such as the assumption that traditions are static and are obstacles to change and innovation (Bowers, 2001, p. 166).

By encouraging our students to make explicit how they have experienced their own unique cultural traditions, Bowers believes they will be more able to recognize how Western "anti-tradition traditions" destroy the possibility of celebrating intergenerational networks capable of preserving the social and environmental commons. In Chapter IV, I discuss the process of intercultural storytelling within my classrooms by encouraging my students to tell their own stories and listen to others as one of many ways to encourage a mutual sharing and acceptance of our varied cultural heritages and intergenerational experience.

The importance of understanding how the socially constructed dimensions of our habits affect our attitudes and belief systems is vital in creating the potential for collective social action *in our own interests*. Our understanding of the relationships *between* dominant and subordinate ways of knowing are enhanced by our understanding of the how our habits of knowing are produced socially.

Gramsci (1971) believes that the concrete and specific culture of everyday life allows for popular differences among people to be practiced, mediated, reproduced, and passed on from generation to generation. Since there can be no social change without

social difference, control of the stories of how social difference is perceived has always been a strategic objective of those in power. Creating greater consciousness of the power that exists within the web of life—in our connections with each other and the land—cuts through the myths we are encouraged to accept that destroy the possibility of finding the solidarity and trust necessary to sustain our world.

The process of understanding the roots of our own cultural and historical traditions enables us to recognize how Western, homogenized cultural myths are often created to blot out cultural diversity and the memory of our unique intercultural heritage. Preserving the continuity of past traditions and relations generates greater feelings of responsibility to preserve our inheritance while directing our attention and work toward present and future challenges.

Fiske (1992) explains that the social spaces where people live and develop social identities, habits of thought, and tastes are also "multidimensional maps of the social order in which the main axes are economic capital, cultural capital, education, class, and historical trajectories" (p. 155). Rather than view practices and identities as fixed, separate categories in some sort of hierarchically determined scale, Fiske views the practices and identities of people as interactive and fluid as they mutually inform each other through the "transgressions of categorical boundaries" (p. 155).

Historical Networks of Human Relationships

The starting point of any critical elaboration is the consciousness of what one really is, and is "knowing" thyself as a product of a historical process … which has deposited in you an infinity of traces … without leaving an inventory. (Gramsci, 1971, p. 324)

How I situate myself within a network of relationships, which recognizes past shared history and experiences translated to me from other primary influences, is what Gramsci (1971) refers to as my "reference schema" for my explanation of the world. While Gramsci (1971), primarily wrote about *human* relationships, he inspired a greater understanding of the connections between the personal and political, as do more grounded feminist approaches to thinking about the world.

Antonio Gramsci was an Italian political and cultural theorist who focused on the analysis of culture as it relates to ideology and political leadership. He wrote from a prison cell where he was sent to silence his radical writings critical of the Mussolini regime. In prison, he explored the question of how it is that people are persuaded to consent to the horrors of fascism. He is best known for developing the concept of hegemony—how power is maintained through the consent of the people.

Gramsci's notion of *organic unity* was an attempt to make organic (natural) links between diverse cultural worlds, ideas, and interpretations. According to Killian Kehoe (2001), Gramsci aimed to construct a whole and integral concept of the world, to understand the ensemble of relations in which we all participate. Gramsci argued

philosophy is a living, acting, and organic process, not separated and abstracted from life but directly related to history and politics.

He believed tradition was more than some sort of cultural capital. He argued that by preserving the continuity of our past, we are best able to discern our responsibilities in the present. The process of understanding our own rootedness allows for a greater appreciation of our own historical process, discovering the traces of family identity, ethnicity, and meaning that live outside dominant Western interpretations of the official stories that perpetuate division, hierarchy, and consent. As I reflect on my own historical network of relationships, understanding the rich and complex *collective wisdom* of my ancestors, of all our ancestors, I feel enriched and more determined than ever to preserve and protect and renew.

While researching my own family's history and genealogy, I developed a deeper appreciation of my ethnic Irish and French–Canadian Catholic roots as well as my family's historical roots of struggle against poverty and British domination. My family heritage includes a history of economic hardship and ethnic discrimination. Our ethnic Irish, and French Cajun identity eventually assimilated into the dominant "white" culture of North America. However, my ethnic identity retains powerful memories of inferiority, shame, and struggle as well as a determination to stand up for others marginalized by dominant power structures.

The powerful emotional force and moral commitment to care for others, followed by both my parents, partially inspired from their religious (Catholic) and moral upbringing, molded and influenced my own moral and ethical commitments. I am proud

of my family legacy to "mourn and rage" over the suffering of others (Welch, 2004, p.

29). These are some of the traces that have shaped my ability to recognize myself in

another's suffering and to feel a sense of rage against indifference, the confidence that I

will do what needs to be done again and again, and the joy and exhilaration I feel when

people come together collectively to do good in the world.

"History is always told by the people in control" (Draffan in Jensen, 2008).

Understanding our particular socio-historical roots is a way of poking holes in the official

story being told to maintain the consent of the people. Gramsci's approach was to take

seriously the complexity and specificity of the cultural worlds people inhabit.

Gramsci (1971, 1995) opposed any notions of fixed or "bounded" cultural entities

existing in isolation from each other or across space. He believed cultures are the product

of specific histories and should be understood as *fluid entities*. When discussing specific

cultures, he argued that we must first take into consideration that character depends on

place and time and the *particular* historical moment in people's lives. In a

groundbreaking essay in *Ebony Magazine* in 1965, James Baldwin argued that:

> History, as nearly no one seems to know, is not merely something to be read. And it
> does not refer merely, or even principally, to the past. On the contrary, the great force
> of history comes from the fact that we carry it within us, are unconsciously controlled
> by it in many ways, and history is literally present in all that we do. It could scarcely
> be otherwise, since it is to history that we owe our frames of reference, our identities,
> and our aspirations. (Baldwin, 1965 in Roediger, 1998, p.320)

Killian Kehoe (2003) discusses the importance of thinking historically as a way to

begin to identify one's task in the world and develop a *living context* in which to think

about our own experience. Ronald and Roskelly (2001) point out the ways in which we become more critical and reflective as we begin to understand our histories, reaching back to discover how past, present, and future become creative dimensions of consciousness that enables us to move toward action. The recovery of "historical consciousness" intimately connects to a critical perception of one's place in the world.

I grew up in New Jersey during the turbulent times of the 1950s and '60s in a large Irish Catholic family of eight children, five girls and three boys. My parents cared deeply about issues of poverty, racism, war, and social injustice. They passionately raised their children to understand the roots of social injustice and our responsibility to become active agents for social change. "Family responsibility" with an emphasis on the common good of all family members, as well as consideration for others less fortunate, was the highest values my parents instilled in our boisterous but cohesive family. We were taught to understand our place and responsibility in the larger family of life and that our own individual needs were always part of a greater whole.

My mother would often say to us, "You're not the only pebble on the beach!" We were taught to consider the needs of the whole family in our decisions and how our deeds affected others, especially others less fortunate than ourselves. I'll never forget the tears in my mother's eyes when she expressed her grief and outrage over the severe inequality faced by African Americans in this country.

The meaning of family and community was expanded to include the whole human family, especially "the poor, starving children in China," whom we heard about when we were having trouble finishing our dinner. The good of the whole community extended to

an understanding of our relationship to others who had less, a respect for hard work, and how we benefited from the labor and resources of others.

As a young adult I participated along side my parents with millions of others of my generation in huge mass mobilizations to end the war in Vietnam. I later worked with many others in broad political movements to increase equal rights for women and African Americans, end racial apartheid in South Africa, and defend the rights of working people for equal access to quality health care, education, jobs, and housing. As a product of the '60s and '70s, I was continually inspired by the collective will of people to fight against injustice and the solidarity that was constructed to collectively co-create radical change.

While I realized at a young age that I was called to teach, I also developed a passion for justice that infused my work as an educator as well as my work within larger communities dedicated to creating a more just world. My life work both professionally and politically has focused on the need to build strong interdependent and democratic communities through collaborative and respectful relationships with families, co-workers, colleagues, and others.

I have witnessed and participated in the creation of broad-based collaborative communities in which the good of the whole was honored and respected. Throughout my work experience as an educator and community activist, I've developed a sense of hope for future generations that collective action based on resistance, mutuality, solidarity, and love is possible. The challenge for future generations is to create interconnected webs of care and connection capable of imagining and creating collaboratively a more just, sustainable, and caring world.

The process of knowing myself as a product of a historical process, excavating the multitude of traces of who I am and where I come from is a process of becoming more deeply human and open to the world in all its awe, wonder, and possibility. These "networks of human relationships" were rooted in the well being of all community members as a form of radical kinship developed. As I actively participated in "going into the fields to harvest and work … passing the bags along … moving in a common rhythm with others," (Piercy, 1963, p.106) I felt that the powerful force for the good could truly overcome the forces of world destruction, hatred, and devastation.

Zandy (1995), in her book *Liberating Memory, Our Work and Our Working-Class Consciousness*, talks about the need for a mutuality of vision that is historically grounded and enables us to see each other's history. Without such a vision we are not able to reconstruct a mutually supportive and enlivened vision that enables us to build the interconnected webs of caring and community that will lead us to create together the world we profess to want.

Recovering our pasts is about uncovering a larger inheritance and consciousness. Out of mutuality, an adherence and allegiance toward each other a kinship is welded from common work. "In the face of a system that calls for distrust and self interest" (Zandy, 1995, p. 10) it is critical to search for and nurture what brings us together in mutual care and concern for the preservation of life.

Many members of my generation had been inspired to participate in the huge mobilizations to end the war in Vietnam and apartheid in South Africa, achieve equal rights for women, and fight for equality and social justice locally and globally. We were a

part of a generation of dreamers who rearranged our lives to do what needed to be done and felt inspired and connected to a global counterforce intent on ending poverty, war, and exploitation.

For decades I had transcended my very being with the collective work and determination to build a better world free of oppression, discrimination, war, and greed. By the early '90s, however, I had drifted into the isolated alienation that many former activists of my generation experienced. It took the major events of September 11, Hurricane Katrina, and years of study for me to recover my warrior spirit.

Mary Catherine Bateson (1989) discusses the threads of continuity that become recurring patterns in one's life, while the discontinuity in one's life can lead to a move from stagnation to new challenges and growth. Holding onto the past too rigidly can impede the exploration of new possibilities for growth and radical transformation.

While volumes have been written about the *meaning* of the '60s, it is not my intention to romanticize a period during which we all loved each other so much. Rather, what I choose to remember and celebrate is the power of collective action rooted in mutuality, solidarity, and trust.

Spretnak (1999) wrote about the extraordinary optimism of the radicalized youth movement of the '60s … the belief that anything was possible and that we were on the verge of making life profoundly better for everyone.

> Perhaps dreams so daring and discontinuous from the status quo contain a sacrificial dimension: They alter the dreamers forever, shaping the contours of their minds with the memory of ecstatic communion and the dull ache of the estimable loss. (p. 179)

There was a sense of organic unity felt collectively throughout our work together that infused feelings of kinship ties with agency and hope. We believed our actions mattered and we could achieve the impossible to build a better world together. There is also a sense of loss felt among many of my friends from that period. We experienced life so profoundly and lovingly. I believe we must re-create similar communities that are conscious of our collectivity and solidarity. Understanding of our dependence on the natural world with greater humility and deep respect is essential to this project.

Rather than focus on the separation of body/mind/spirit, self/other, and human/nature dichotomies, the telling of everyone's unique and culturally rich story allows for the greatest possible unfolding as well as the meshing of a cultural commons that is all encompassing and sustainable. In Chapter III, I further address the importance of developing intergenerational webs of knowing and living that respect forms of knowledge rooted in traditional, place-based and ecological ways of living responsibly. Rather than adhere to Western frameworks of meaning that prioritize the individual as the basic social unit, my concerns are about how we live in common with an appreciation of the limits and the possibilities of our local and global ecosystems.

> We do not need more economic growth as much as we need to relearn the ancient lesson of generosity, as trustees for a moment between those who preceded us and those who will follow. Our greatest needs have nothing to do with the possession of things but rather with heart, wisdom, thankfulness, and generosity of spirit. And these virtues are part of larger ecologies that embrace, spirit, body, and mind—the beginning of design. (Orr, 2002, p. 32)

By developing a stronger understanding and acceptance of our own rootedness and inheritance, and our connections to place, we are more able to see ourselves outside the numbing influence of market-based culture that seeks to persuade us to act against our own interests. The more rooted we are to people and place, the more able we are to resist the mind-numbing culture of degradation and seduction that compel us to participate in the destruction of our own habitat.

I have come to believe that we must focus on *all our relations*, founded on self-understanding and intergenerational, place-based experience—our particular as well as collective experience and wisdom. Further, I believe that by honoring our embeddedness to nature and place, we are best able to love what we love, fight the destruction of our common experience, and create new possibilities for sustainability and survival.

Bridging Discontinuity

How do we *bridge* the discontinuity of what we imagined and hoped for with the living reality of the present? How do past dreams mesh with a reinterpretation of meaning and a redefinition of future challenges? As I explore new ways of thinking about my own life and the patterns and fragments of experience that combine to help direct future work, I struggle to make sense of the inconsistencies, ruptures, and riddles of how the parts fit together into a more organic unity of the living.

Thomas Berry's (2002) notion of creative disequilibrium is instrumental. He argues for an acceptance of the tension between looking back and pushing for justice

while also looking forward with the ability to envision new possibilities for creating

alternative cultures that celebrate life in all its awe and wonder. Having been a social-

justice activist and educator most of my life, I've had the experience of decades of

fighting for equality and justice in the world, but not of *practicing* and living grounded by

a loving vision of how to live with each other in reciprocity, mutuality, and respect.

The certainty with which we held onto our beliefs, structures of meaning, and

strategies for bringing about change in the world, led to adherence to fixed, dogmatic,

top-down control of the story we chose to tell. We considered ourselves to be all-

knowing—and others in need of our expert knowledge. Many deemed personal and

emotional connections to family tradition and place as weakening the cause of justice. To

strive forward at all costs to fight the powers that be, connections that rooted us to place,

family and friends became suspect. We had a plan. Nothing could stand in the way of

certain victory.

I believe we must become more comfortable with the uncertainty and ambiguity

of meshing past lessons of our rich, diverse, and sometimes brutal history with living

sustainably in the present and with a vision resolutely turned toward the future. Studying

what is possible with an emphasis on long-term sustainability and ecological ways of

knowing provides us with stronger guidance in decision-making and prioritizing

critical action.

The current culture of distrust, fear, and competition has been so thoroughly

engrained in our consciousness that one of our greatest challenges is to reconstruct

and re-imagine new ways of thinking and acting that poke holes in existing *official*

stories of individualism, competition, dogma, and greed. How do we honor each other's stories—*everyone's story*—while remaining resolutely focused on the challenges before us?

Critical educators and social-change agents are beginning to rethink what is lost in our gallant pursuit of radical progressive change. Bold declarations of independence and liberation among various political movements often disregard the commonalities that we share and our need *for* each other that are embedded in *older contours of wisdom* (Spretnak, 1999). We know so well what we're against but what are we for and how do we get there? We must begin to ask, "What do we want to preserve?" as well as, "What do we want to change?" One of our greatest challenges as educators and community leaders is to understand how our own cultural assumptions prioritize individualist perspectives and offer nationalist, anthropocentric, and self-serving solutions that exclude the physical needs of most of the world's people and the biosphere that is our home.

In Chapter IV I further discuss ways I believe we can interrupt the culture of death and destruction and separation to allow a collective consciousness to emerge that celebrates the preciousness of all our relations as well as the urgency to act. By creating more *reunifying stories* of hope, solidarity, caring and trust, we can create spaces that nurture and cherish our relationships with one another, outside of the harsh realities of a competitive, ruthless culture of greed and selfishness. By encouraging greater humility and openness to hearing other's truths, we are more able to let go of our need for certainty, power, and control of the story.

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Bridging discontinuity requires reflection as well as a tolerance for ambiguity. Disparate truths can exist in an uneasy tension, requiring a willingness to struggle with different forces and the need to control the story. Through developing an appreciation for how we fit into a larger system and biosphere, we are able to let go of deadening dogmas and frameworks that prevent us from struggling for connection with others from different life experiences as members of the commons.

Living Systems

Richard Kahn (2008) expands on ideas of thinking and living historically to include thinking ecologically as "we move in a bed of context" (p. 1). Moving "in a bed of context" that surrounds our ways of knowing and being in the world is a systemic and *co-emergent* process. Barbara Gail Hanson (1995) in her book *Systems Theory: Beginning with Wholes* describes an approach to understanding phenomena that shifts thinking from linear cause and blame as a target of analysis to a more open, co-emergent process of interrelated systems of understanding.

I studied *family systems* theory in the context of my work as an educator and social worker, including the study of diverse traditional and indigenous ways of knowing and understanding illness, grief, and loss. In my second master's degree program in Family Studies, I was introduced to the work of Gregory Bateson, an anthropologist and psychologist who wrote about the "ecology of mind," rooted in *systems* of understanding and ecological perspectives on a broader scale (1972).

Bateson is best known for his investigation of systems analysis and thinking. In his book *Steps Toward an Ecology of Mind* (1972), he combines his knowledge of psychiatry, genetics and communication theory to examine the nature of mind. Bateson was the son of pioneer geneticist, William Bateson, the husband of famed anthropologist Margaret Mead, and father of Mary Catherine Bateson whose writing I also refer to in this chapter. Gregory Bateson understood that intelligence is influenced by "interpretive frameworks (cultural maps) carried forward in the culture's languaging process and involves interactive relationships with the environment" (Bowers, 1991, p. 19).

Bowers (2001) refers to Bateson in his own work to *revitalize the commons*. He views the commons as "cultural ecology that interacts with the ecology of natural systems" (p. 42). Bateson (1972) believed the unit of survival is organism plus environment. Bowers argued that many indigenous cultures have understood for centuries "that the organism which destroys its own environment destroys itself" (p. 42). This bitter lesson has not yet sunk in to many Westerners preoccupied by self-betterment, consumption and disengagement.

Fritjof Capra (in Stone & Barlow, 2005) describes the theory of living systems as thinking in terms of complex systems, networks, and patterns. He points to the ancient system of indigenous peoples whose wisdom of the earth sustained their lives for thousands of years. Living systems are interdependent networks, non-linear and interactive, rooted in "patterns" of relationships.

Living systems thinking requires an understanding of basic principles of ecology, which emphasize connectedness, interdependence, context, and reciprocity. Moving from

an emphasis on parts to wholes, from objects to relationships and from objective

knowledge to contextual knowledge requires new ways of conceiving the world. In

contrast to Western dualistic and positivist ways of knowing that focus on objective

quantifying, living systems focus on the relationships of phenomena that are not

quantifiable (Capra in Stone & Barlow, 2005).

Searching for linear cause and blame derives from an assumption-based way of

thinking that does not take into account the multiple contexts and truths that complicate

an understanding of phenomena. We are embedded in dynamic relationships and

processes that have the potential to honor and prioritize our commonalities and patterns

that encourage healing of past wrongs while remaining open to present challenges.

Understanding our interconnectedness encourages mutual responsibility and reciprocity

as members of a local community and global universe.

Living systems theory is critical of the work of Descartes and Francis Bacon, who

radically departed from *pre-historical* approaches that focused on a more organic, holistic

view of the world. Descartes and his followers created a modern, mechanistic worldview

that prioritized abstract and "rationalist" thinking that subordinated an understanding of

our physical and emotional connection to the natural world. Jensen (2000) believes the

primary purpose of Descartes' philosophy was to provide justification for greater

systemic exploitation (p. 19).

Separating mind from body, self from others, and humans from nature rationalizes

dualistic oppositions that justify the notion of gaining or pursuing one's own interest at

the expense of *others*, others who have less value on a hierarchical scale. A universal

system of rational (mind over matter) thinking has lead to an acceptance of the destruction of our ecological basis of life. According to Jensen (2000), Descartes himself believed that modern science led to a type of knowledge that was highly *useful,* *"*rendering ourselves as supreme beings and possessors of nature itself" (p. 19).

Worse yet, the dualism and separation of knowledge systems is at the root of our *justification* of human domination and exploitation all over the world. Our ability to justify damage being done leads to an instrumentalist way of viewing the world. There can be a rational reason and justification for everything, which is how masses of Germans looked the other way as horrible atrocities were being committed.

I first became acutely aware of *thinking* systemically through my work as an early intervention educator and family-service coordinator. The bulk of my life-work experience involved working closely with families impacted by economic hardship, disability, and discrimination. In my roles as an educator, service coordinator, social worker and community organizer, I experienced first hand how even when we worked along side other service providers we worked in isolation from each other. We struggled to view the families we served in context, as a whole system and rooted in a larger community. When we functioned as a team, which included the family, we were far more capable of supporting the interconnected needs of all involved. Our relationships mattered most.

For families of children with special needs, the central focus, too often, becomes the ill child and how that illness can be diagnosed and treated in a linear pattern. Cause and blame filter into the picture, and many families feel responsible for their child's

disability. Rather than start with a child/family's strengths, this model focuses on what's

wrong with the child and family instead of focusing on what's going well. A focus on the

interrelated, emerging challenges of a family with a special-needs child allows for the

creation of unfolding possibilities for family wellness outside of attempting to "fix" the

problem in the eyes of a dominant worldview that does not honor difference. Instead

many families feel blamed for their child's problems and develop distrust and fear of

many intrusive "professionals."

Understanding the cultural and historical context of the child's family life, where

the family lives, their national identity, economic circumstances, and the family's overall

wellness are interrelated. A child with special needs has a whole body, living in a whole

family, nested in a whole community that is nested in regional land systems and

biosphere. The "special needs" of the child, such as hearing, physical tone, speech, and

emotional affect cannot be separated from the rest of the child's body or well-being. Each

piece, in isolation is just one component of the child's developmental needs.

Family systems theory is viewed as an interactional system, as family members

are interrelated and interdependent. In a family-system framework of meaning, the

welfare of whole children living in whole families is seen in "dynamic process of

person-environment relationships" (Gargiulo & Kilgo, 2000). This approach takes

away the need to search for "causes" that can't be solved in a linear or isolated fashion.

Instead, it focuses on the interrelated patterns, strengths and challenges, and the

developing possibilities that can only arise out of a fluid, interrelated, and co-emergent

living process.

A wholes approach shines through in transforming the conventional assumptions-based debates by providing a new language or meta-theory for confronting issues that allows for, but does not necessitate, assumptions. In so doing it provides a pan-disciplinary and a-assumptive theoretical approach that captures new modes of thinking about the world that are not tied to the specifics of culture, disciplinary, ideological or political debates. (Hanson, 1995, p. 9)

Mary Catherine Bateson (2004), the daughter of Gregory Bateson and renowned anthropologist Margaret Mead, believes systemic thinking about the body, families, communities, or the whole of the planet "must imply inclusiveness, chemistry and poetry … complex systems approached through multiple paths of knowing" (p. 290). In her book *Composing a Life*, Bateson (1989) wrote about a process that involves continually re-imagining the future, and reinterpreting the past to give meaning to the future. "The effort to compose a life, framed by birth and death, and carefully pieced together from disparate elements becomes a statement on the unity of the living" (Bateson, 1989, p. 18).

A *wholes* approach to understanding the world transcends the conventional debates by unhinging itself from assumptions that require proof and often blame—a binary process of what works and what doesn't—to an open-ended investigation of interrelated phenomena that enable greater understanding, consensus, and mutual decision-making.

Expanding the human family to include the natural world allows for an embodied appreciation of our ecological embeddedness. In *Listening to the Land*, Derrick Jensen (2002) speaks about prioritizing and valuing relationships that "evoke and nurture the unfolding of the person and the deep subjectivity of every entity on the planet" (p. 49).

We are embodied organisms embedded in nature. McKensie (2008) points out how interwoven and essentially inseparable cultural and environmental issues are when considering what should to be done. Employing Raymond William's concept of *structures of feeling,* McKensie believes socio-ecological learning takes place *in between* thought and the senses via *intersubjective* experience. In Chapter IV, I include intercultural storytelling as one approach to include the structures of feeling in which my own students are embedded as one way to start with where we are connected to new understanding.

Body, Nature, and Place

We must love life before loving its meaning …
If love of life disappears no meaning can console us. (Dostoevsky)

How is it that we can talk rationally about war, rape, torture, hunger, and the destruction of our ecosystem? Our hyper-separation from the natural world as well as from each other forces us to live in a world that does not make sense. How we make meaning has become so removed from the concrete experience of humans and others within our eco-system that it is difficult to find words to explain such loss.

A mechanistic view of reality separates substance from process. It separates thought from feeling, self from other, and human life from our biological system. "Sensations, emotions, intuitions, concepts, all condition each other, each a way of apprehending the relationships which weave our world" (Macy, 1998, p. 42).

Heesoon Bai (2009) speaks of the *psychic numbing* created by a mechanistic worldview that separates thought from feeling, leading to an inability to feel the pain of others. Bai refers to R.D. Laing, who points to a loss of an *experiential bond* between our lived experience and the larger universe in which we belong. The loss of such a bond and the accompanying feelings of separation and denial lead to an instrumentalist mindset that justifies manipulation, control, exploitation, and destruction.

An assumed universal system of rationality normalizes the notion of pursuing one's own interests at the expense of others. It rationalizes the destruction of others and their homes, forests, waterways, and mountains in the pursuit of human wants that are re-defined as needs. Dominant, rationalist forms of knowledge have created the destruction of our basis for life. We look the other way and separate ourselves as we become adept at rationalizing our lack of responsibility and willingness to participate in the necessary changes that could seriously alter our current decline. We engage in systems of denial to numb the impact of the shattering of the world.

Bai (2009) believes that Plato, the patriarch of Western rationality, created the most decisive condemnation of the sensuous by prioritizing the development of rational and analytic thinking. Plato objected to the development of Homeric, poetic consciousness, as the Homeric poets appeal to the senses and emotions of the listener. He questioned what is *real* by prioritizing the rational mind over the intuitive, emotional, and deeply felt.

> Plato's goal was to create a rational, as opposed to emotional, and a conceptual as opposed to poetic subjectivity. Plato's program was to createphilosopher the thinker, as opposed to poet, the bard. In short Plato was heading a major epistemological revolution that changed the very texture, tone, and color of human consciousness: from the sensuous, emotive, empathic, participatory …to the conceptual, abstract, and analytic rational mind or discursive consciousness. (Bai, p. 139)

In her book *The Resurgence of the Real,* Charlene Spretnak (1999) argues that by paying more attention to the power of body, nature, and place we're "poking large holes through modern ideologies of denial" (p. 4). We have been taught to favor projections of the mind over what our hearts, body, and souls tell us. Nature, our physical context, and our bodies are not separate from "place" or what Spretnak called the "physical site of community." By developing a critical understanding of our own psychological and cultural embeddedness, we are more capable of imagining alternatives to our existing crisis.

"Human culture can either enrich and build upon that physical level of community, and thus enjoy a rich eco-social system experience, or deny and ignore it, as the modern world view tends to do" (Spretnak, 1999, p. 4). Spretnak believes our ways of knowing and thinking are grounded in our bodily experiences in nature and in society and culture as a whole. Reincorporating the knowing body, a sense of place, and a greater sense of awe and wonder of the creative cosmos into ways of understanding and thinking about our lives would seriously alter our understanding of the current world crisis.

Val Plumwood (2002) advocates for a deep and comprehensive restructuring of culture. She believes our human- and reason-centered culture has been blind to the fundamental ecological relationships that have been destroyed by technology. As we

hyper-separate ourselves from nature and each other, we participate in our own unintentional subjugation, and neglect. Plumwood argues that we can reestablish our connectedness to the earth community, which is our home, by replacing monological, hierarchical, mechanistic models of change with more mutual, communicative, and responsive ones.

It doesn't make sense to speak of our sense of civic and political commitments in ways that compartmentalize issues and ignore our relationship to the natural world. Our natural system is taken for granted to serve our mechanistic purpose rather than understood as the complex system of organisms and patterns—a profound interrelationship of forces. A mechanistic way of life sees the body as a machine rather than a "system of complex and interrelated capabilities" (Spretnak, 1999, p. 2).

Western-dominant economic systems based on rational "economism" have created dualistic oppositions between reason, body, and nature. Viewing the non-human world as separate, we justify human domination and destruction as we lose our ability to empathize with the non-human world. Plumwood believes our capacity to gain insight is about understanding our own social and environmental context and developing the humility to learn from self-critical perspectives of the past, which recognize our own limitations of vision for creative change and survival.

We are rooted in dynamic relationships and processes that have the potential to honor and prioritize our commonalties and heal past wrongs while remaining open to our own responsibility in the cosmos. By recovering an awareness of our context, we can honor "living organisms, nested in communities within their ecosystems all over the

world, (who) regulate the planet's atmosphere" (Spretnak, 1999, p. 24). As we develop a better understanding of our own human-centeredness that disregards the natural world, we are far more capable of understanding our own culpability in a centric analysis that maintains human superiority, reason, and mastery as justification for our own neglect and brutality.

> As we become conscious of the unseen depths that surround us, the inwardness or interiority that we have come to associate with the personal psyche begins to be encountered in the world at large: we feel ourselves enveloped, immersed, caught up within the sensuous world. (Abram, 1996, p. 260)

The most vivid memories of my childhood integrate physical, sensory, and emotional experience. I grew up at a time when children spent the bulk of their lives outside. We created our own interactive games—building forts, catching bugs, creating new and imaginative ways to play in the woods, at the oceanfront, in the barn out back, and on the front porch with all the neighborhood children.

We grew up deeply engaged with the physical and social world. My dad would come home from a hard day's work of building houses and just plop down on the living room floor to rest, have his feet tickled by his children, and play "alligator" with us as we ran across the room screeching with delight. We played outside until dusk every day, danced on the dinner table after eating, and wrestled on the floor to solve many problems.

My father's love for physical activity and sports instilled in us a love of physical and sensory activities. Always looking for a game, he showed us how to build human pyramids on the beach, taught us to swim and dive at an early age, and encouraged us to

excel in sports, which we have continued into adulthood. He played handball

professionally, and almost all his children were athletes, many still competing in

marathons and triathlons at advanced ages. We spent our summers outside, surrounded by

water, sun and sand, and pure joy. My father would lie in the sand after swimming and

fall asleep while listening to the sound of his children's playful voices close by.

Although my father trained to become a physical education teacher, his love for

the outdoors and his need to *create with his hands* led him into carpentry and home

building. The smell of sawdust and the experience of watching a house being physically

built from the ground up influenced my own love of creating, re-creating and envisioning

new possibilities. My dad would walk into Home Depot and brighten up as if it was a

house of worship. He loved experimenting with novel materials and putting things

together to create something new and innovative. The homes he built for his own family

were imaginative and aesthetically appealing, with high ceilings, skylights and lots of

glass to allow in nature.

Appreciating my own physical context, feeling it deep within my soul, roots me in

a natural and emotional world that continues to nurture my sense of responsibility to

preserve and nourish our planet for survival. I will be forever grateful to both my parents

for all their hard work in cultivating and valuing family life and traditions as well as a

deep connection to the physical world and social world.

My mother was responsible for teaching us to *care* for others as we developed

emotional lives rich with play, creativity, freedom to explore and learning from our own

mistakes. I vividly remember my mother telling me about a lecture she heard from

Jonathan Kozol about poverty and education. Tears welled up in her eyes as she spoke of the injustice of a child humiliated by their own poverty. Growing up in a large family offered invaluable life lessons about the necessity of sharing, caring, struggling, negotiating, and participating in something larger than ourselves. There were lots of "other pebbles on the beach," part of a larger community of life that demanded our care and participation.

Bai (2009) believes we are wired for participatory consciousness. A world experienced through an animated consciousness or what she terms *biophilia* is a world alive with poetry, music, and song—and with rich feelings of love and possibility, celebration, and joining with others. The solution does not lie in moralistic persuasion, prescriptions, or rationalist scolding. People learn by feeling inspired, connected, deeply engaged and alive with anticipation and joy.

> The solution is to learn to truly become the kind of consciousness that embodies respect, compassion, care, and love. Let the eyes, ears, mouth, skin … make love to the world! Transformation at the base of consciousness and at the heart of being is what we as educators are after here. It is not unless and until our whole being becomes respectfully and lovingly relational to the world that we can truly practice respect, (and) love … (Bai, 2009, p. 145-146)

Restorying and Restructuring

Viewing education as a cultural and environmental phenomenon, the authors of *Fields of Green: Restorying Culture, Environment and Education* encourage an exploration of new stories of hope and survival and deeply rooted connections to place,

which serve to break through binding *official knowledge* and stories that are created to

maintain our disconnectedness (McKensie, Hart, Bai & Jinckling, 2009). Systemic

thinking about the body, families, communities, and the whole of the planet allows for

what Mary Catherine Bateson (2004) described as inclusiveness, chemistry and poetry.

Abram (1996) believes the way we judge a story has to do with whether it *makes*

sense, and whether it makes sense is determined by how it enlivens our *senses.* To do

this, Abram believes we must become freed from the comforting ways of knowing and

speaking that hold us back from renewing and rejuvenating a *felt sense* of awareness.

> A story that makes sense is one that stirs the senses from their slumber, one that
> opens the eyes and the ears to their real surroundings, turning the tongue to the actual
> tastes in the air and sending chills of recognition along the surface of the skin. (p.
> 265)

Castoriadis (1997) speaks of the development of social creativity, which, were it

unleashed, would leave behind all we are capable of thinking, building, and doing. By

encouraging the development of *systemic wisdom* and social creativity that honors our

interdependence, intergenerational knowledge, and our rootedness to place, we are more

able to protect, nurture, and preserve what we love.

As we become more acutely aware of the destruction of the earth in all its

manifestations, educators, and community activists are becoming more cognizant of the

necessity to create greater understanding of our deeply felt interconnections with and

dependence on our natural community. Environmentalists, social ecologists, eco-

feminists and others are reminding us that any discussion about the survival of humanity

must include an understanding of our organic connection and dependence on the survival of the earth family. This includes ethical intersubjective relations within the human family and the importance of understanding each other's historical and cultural contexts, all leading toward the potential for organic unity of diverse cultural belief systems and the rich diversity of our natural world.

It also requires, as Derrick Jensen (2000) describes, taking off our cultural eyeglasses. Jensen points to how our deeply embedded cultural assumptions allow us to look the other way as we collude with a culture of destruction and death. Cultural assumptions that prioritize individual needs above the collective needs of the community, national above the needs of the entire world community, and human needs above the needs of our eco-system to survive thwart our ability to recognize our own collusion with destruction. As we hyper-separate and draw borders and boundaries we justify not getting involved in the care for others. Through our distortions and denials of the serious peril of our world, we block out the suffering of others and the destruction of our physical environment from our consciousness. Why, asks Jensen did Descartes not ask "I love therefore I am" or *I feel therefore I am* (2000, p. 8-9).

Jensen believes that as we turn the other way and participate in numbing denial or attempt a rational discussion about a reality that is out of control with violence, greed, brutality, and disconnection, we perpetuate our own disconnection. We cannot solve the problems of an irrational world with the same frameworks that got us into this mess. What is required to help break through deadening nihilism and hyper-separation to

inspire and engage others to work toward the good of the whole community? Thomas

Berry (1999) believes we must reinvent what it means to be human.

> The human venture depends absolutely on this quality of awe and reverence and joy in the Earth and all that lives and grows upon the Earth. As soon as we isolate ourselves from these currents of life and from the profound mood that these engender within us, then our basic life-satisfactions are diminished. None of our machine-made products, none of our computer-based achievements can evoke total commitment to life from the subconscious regions of our being that is needed most to sustain the Earth. (p. 166)

Human/Earth Relations

The late Thomas Berry, an environmental and cultural historian provided an inspiring guide to the historic mission of our times. In his book *The Great Work: Our Way into the Future*, Berry (1999) argued that this historic moment requires both a critical understanding of the destruction of the earth and a move from human-centered ways of knowing to a human/earth relationship. The natural world demands a response beyond rational calculation and reasoning to a response "that arises from the wild unconscious depths of the human soul" (p. 55).

Berry (1999) believed our knowledge systems have to be in harmony with the natural world and within community life systems. Earth community refers to our links with one another in the biosphere, our physical connections to our earliest origins. Once we are able to see the earth as a single community with ethical relations that demand our participation and accountability, we will understand the critical importance of our participation in the well being and healing of the total earth community.

As the process of industrialization continues to isolate humans from the currents of life, our basic life satisfactions are alienated and thwarted. The critical project of the human species is to awaken our human consciousness to a sense of the sacredness of the earth. Not only must we awaken to cultural ways of knowing embedded in our connections to place and intergenerational knowledge, but we must also awaken to the depth of our inner selves, for others in the earth community, and to the spiritual heritage of the universe.

Renowned educator and eco-feminist Joanna Macy and her colleague Molly Young Brown (1998) talk of a different idea of power that operates more organically from the bottom up as *power-with,* a notion termed by systems scientists as *synergy.* Rather than the exertion of force, which is dysfunctional and serves to erect walls of defense, reactivity, and separation, power–with creates an opening for integration and differentiation through constant interaction, interconnections, and the development of more flexible strategies.

Power-with is a process that engages all life forms as they evolve in complexity and increasing responsiveness rather than reactivity. Old concepts of power-over assume reality to be discrete, separate entities that impose hierarchy and notions of domination, view property as a zero-sum game, and use competition and reactivity as major forms of survival.

Reacting to power-over us by use the same methods and hierarchical ways of knowing simply replaces one hierarchical system for another. If we don't address the systemic issues at their roots and understand the patterns that continue to perpetuate

blame, divisions, and hierarchy, we will stay mired in anger, reactivity, and destructive ways of living that will not sustain our living planet.

Macy and Brown (1998) emphasize that the concept of power-with encourages the development of empathy and assertiveness in responding to the needs of the larger systems in which we are embedded. As we act responsibly *within larger systems,* we think about the good of the whole and realize we are sustained by a myriad of resources, which include differences as well as commonalties.

When considering the "common good," we realize there are overlapping challenges requiring feedback to the whole system, thereby transforming many of our assumptions and premises that ground the operation of the system. Adjusting the norms from individual, competitive self-interest to collective, systemic well being allows for an unfolding of courage and *collective, collaborative intelligence* that foster the greatest possible revitalization of the whole system. New capacities emerge that create new connections that are woven together and generate new responses outside of reactivity that "is sustained … by currents of power that are larger than one's own" (Macy & Brown, p. 54).

I have grown to believe that a radical shift in the way we think about the world must include an understanding and appreciation of the complex and interrelated cultural ways of knowing that include our embeddedness in the natural world. Understanding a sense of place, including intergenerational ways of knowing, makes possible a more "viable dream of a mutually enhancing human presence within an ever-renewing organic-based Earth community" (Berry, 2006, p. 201). By embracing the place we call our home

with a new spiritual awakening and depth of self-awareness, and with a critical reflection

of our historic task, we can co-create "something radiant with meaning that draws us

through an imaginative process" (p. 201) and guides our action toward wholeness.

I returned to school to explore how to better *answer with my life* the new post 9/11

world of perpetual war, global poverty, devastation, and destruction. Gramsci (1971)

believed emergent collective cultures arise through practical experiences and disruptions

as we learn from our past-and incorporate the lessons for future survival. Along the way,

I've learned a great deal about the importance of creating communities of solidarity,

mutuality, and trust, which include harmony with the natural world that nurtures and

sustains us.

In the next chapter I explore future capacities for collective and democratic

leadership revealing a systems approach to understanding the meaning of democratic

practice. Through an exploration of diverse theoretical approaches that define the

meaning of democracy, I address the challenge of redefining the project of democracy in

the current era of global economic, social, and environmental destruction. I explore what

is required to reinvigorate an active and engaged world citizenry to work towards our

collective survival. What are the most urgent tasks for educators and community activists

to generate the necessary shift in consciousness from market based values to mutually

accountable, engaged communities of solidarity and reciprocity?

If we cease to hold each other dear and precious, we will not be able to build the

webs of caring, mutuality, and trust required to resist the current onslaught of destruction.

With our heads titled backward and stuck in determinist frameworks of meaning that are

focused on mechanistic and *instrumental solutions* to change, we will not be able to see clearly the possibility of re-creating more mutual, communicative, and responsive models of change that place our partnership with each other and the earth on a sustainable basis.

When our knowledge systems are in harmony with the natural world and within community life systems, we will view the earth as a single community with ethical relations that demand our participation and accountability. What brings us together in joy and humility—struggling, raging, loving, delighting in the preciousness of our existence—is the substance of life that creates the greatest possible awakening of all our senses—to reprioritize the great work ahead.

CHAPTER III

LIVING DEMOCRACY

> In this moral universe, all activities, events, and entities are related, and so it doesn't matter what kind of existence an entity enjoys—whether it is human or otter or star or rock—because the responsibility is always there for it to participate in the continuing creation of reality. Life is not a predatory jungle, "red in tooth and claw," as Westerners like to pretend, but is a symphony of mutual respect in which each player has a specific part to play. (Deloria, V. in Jensen, 2008, pp. 265-266)

My father studied to be an educator under the GI Bill following World War II. While in school, he became enamored by the great American educator, John Dewey, who wrote about the importance of democracy in education. My dad loved children and was a natural-born educator. He only taught for a brief time, as it became difficult to support a growing family of eventually eight children on a meager teaching salary. His second love was building and the process of creating something new. He was a dreamer of sorts and thrived on being outdoors. It was natural that he became a carpenter and builder, but he remained loyal to the democratic principles of John Dewey, whose famous work, *Democracy and Education* (1916), I later read while training to become a teacher.

Both my parents emphasized that democracy is ultimately a responsibility of all members of a community. My dad would remind us again and again that democracy was far more than simply a *right*, it was also a *responsibility,* especially for his own children. Something we must do, not assume. Both my parents believed strongly that everyone has the right to *participate in* the American dream, no one should be left out, and with rights

come responsibility for everyone. They worked long, hard hours themselves to make this dream come true for their family of 10 and emphasized consistently that we belonged to a larger family of beings to whom we were all responsible.

We sat around a long, wooden dining-room table, handcrafted by my father, often talking about politics and current events over dinner as they related to our homework questions. We learned not to ask too many questions because my dad's enthusiasm could turn into long monologues about the virtues of participatory, democratic education. If we didn't finish our dinner, we were reminded of the poor, starving children in China. We were raised with a great respect for the values of equality, respect for diversity, and the critical necessity of civic engagement and participation as cornerstones of healthy democracy.

John Dewey advocated for democracy as a way of life and called for a revitalization of civic society. He believed strong democracies require citizens who are capable of making informed decisions with an eye toward the *common good*. Citizens in a democracy must be literate and have access to a broad range of information to participate fully and act responsibly toward our fellow human beings. In Chapter IV, I include a critique of Dewey's emphasis on the scientific method of problem solving, his focus on individual autonomy, and his anthropocentrism. I am thankful, however, for growing up with such a clear emphasis on participatory, *inclusive* democratic practice that values the needs of the whole community.

Following in my parents' footsteps, I became a teacher, community activist, and leader in the work of creating justice and equity in the world. Throughout most of my

work experience, I witnessed a different reality—far from the ideal—of a deeply divided and unequal social structure. I witnessed how the poor, vulnerable, disabled, and elderly had less access to goods and services, and less ability to influence how decisions were made that affect their wellbeing. I've witnessed the disproportionate number of women with children and people of color living in poverty and the disproportionate number of black men incarcerated and sentenced to death. I've personally witnessed on a deeper level how the mentally challenged are treated like criminals by a harsh, uncaring system of neglect and denial.

We live in a world that has increasingly used idealized notions of democracy to perpetuate war and theft of land and resources against those who do not practice our brand of democracy. Cornell West, in his book *Democracy Matters: Winning the Fight Against Imperialism* (2004) discusses the challenges of redefining the democratic spirit in our current age of corporate domination of the public mind, the ideology of market fundamentalism, and obsessive consumerism. West talks of the comforting illusions that sedate the masses of people and the "insidious growth of deadening nihilism … that have been suffocating the deep democratic energies in America" (p. 26).

In this chapter, I explore the paradox of democracy and the challenges to democratic practice, given the current onslaught of global, economic, social, and environmental destruction. What is required to redefine the project of democracy that reinvigorates an active and engaged world citizenry committed to working together for collective survival? What is the role of market fundamentalism and globalization in perpetuating individualism and *deadening nihilism*? How do we widen the circle to

include an understanding of *Earth Democracy,* as developed by Indian author, physicist, and environmental activist Vandana Shiva (2005), which extends to the global community and our natural world in all considerations?

The interests of large transnational corporations increasingly control our world, and their subsidiaries plunder, destroy, and extract resources from others for their own gain. I contrast the meaning of neo-liberal democracy with other principles of *participatory, deliberative,* i*nclusive, and living democracy* and the moral and ethical considerations required for the continual challenges ahead.

How do we redefine inclusive democratic practice to allow for self-critical, open-ended relationships that continually strive for what Jacques Derrida calls "democracy to come" (Caputo, 1997)? What forms of democratic decision-making are required to assure that all our relations are valued, respected, and nourished? I seek to develop a deeper understanding of responsibility and rights, moral and ethical reciprocity, and mutuality and trust that ensures equity, care and the preservation of our cultural and environmental commons. Finally, I conclude with values, or "arts" and skills, required to reinvigorate an active and engaged world citizenry capable of challenging the existing world of empire through collective, ethical, and caring communities. In Chapter IV, I explore ways of knowing and learning that best encourage and inspire others to participate in this process.

Welcoming the "Other"

Jaques Derrida (1997) believes the project of democracy entails an opening and welcoming of the other, making borders more porous and boundaries less defined. He encourages "hospitality" as a responsibility to the other and a promise of what can become. The possibility of hospitality is sustained by the very impossibility of ever completely arriving. Moving from self-interest, safety and security toward generosity and an affirmation of openness to others creates an open-ended affirmation of the other, inviting new possibilities to be co-created collectively.

In Derrida's vision of a future democracy is an "affirmation of responsibility" rooted in generosity, or "the gift that gives of itself without return whenever the occasion calls for it" (1997, p. 123). Deconstructing fixed notions of community and democracy points toward the possibility of a community to come—a community open to breaking down the walls of its own self-limiting identity. Creating such a community open to *the other,* with a generosity and welcoming hospitality toward each other, would encourage the flourishing of democratic values and practice that could become the foundation for new forms of democratic living.

Derrida speaks of a democracy to come in which an understanding of identity as fixed or homogeneous can become a form of settling in to comfortable, safe notions of belonging, while shutting out others. By breaking down the "self-gathering circle of the same" (Caputo, 1997, p. 116), communities are able to acknowledge an openness and

affirmation of *the other*. Later in this chapter an exploration of the other includes the exclusion of nature from our concern and care.

Derrida advocates that we nurture a culture of self-differentiation rather than cultivate colonies of the same identity, which begin to form in common defense against the other. These subcultures of the same become self-propelling prophecies, unable to welcome the other and at war with people of diverse identities or viewpoints. These colonies of like-minded people develop in defense of their feelings of "otherness" but neglect their own exclusive tendencies to keep others out and maintain their own closely guarded communities.

Although Bauman (1995) excludes the natural world from consideration, his insights into the nature of human fragmentation as it relates to cultures of fear and insecurity is helpful in understanding how cultures of the same are created and maintained to prevent the inclusion of others. Bauman (1995) discusses fragmentary, episodic encounters characterized by parts of the self being held back in privacy, including only a part of the multi-sided self without the rich multi-faceted desires and interests of each human being.

> Each encounter is given the appearance of a self-disclosed, even self-sustained entity. The most important consequence of the episodic nature of the encounter is the lack of consequences—encounters tend to be inconsequential in the sense of not leaving a lasting legacy of mutual rights and/or obligations in their wake (Bauman, p. 50).

In the above forms of togetherness, interactions between people are characterized as *being-aside* each other, rather than a meeting *between* complete selves. On the other

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hand, *being-for* forms of interaction move from isolation to unity, but not fusion, as an alloy "whose precious qualities depend fully on the preservation of its ingredients' alterity and identity" (Bauman, 1995, p. 51). Bauman believes we must become more open to the development of mutuality outside of our own needs for control and certainty.

Equally critical is the importance of understanding the potential consequences of our interactions. The more isolated and disconnected we become through our own need to protect ourselves from difference, the more likely we are to maintain episodic relationships. To preserve a comfortable certainty that does not challenge identity or our fears of others, we protect ourselves from commitment and intimacy required to develop mutuality and trust.

Replacing reason or the rules of ethical engagements are sentiment and emotions, feelings and passion, the unpredictable, stretching, and often impossibly random activities that happen in the public square. *Civility* in the public sphere is replaced by spontaneity and the unspoken demands of human relationships. While social norms create relatively clear guidelines and codes of ethics about right and wrong, the radical *unspokenness* of rebellious morality, emotion, feeling, and passion embrace the impossible uncharted territory. Bauman defines this passage from *being-with* others to *being-for* as one "from convention to commitment; this tearing-off the masks until the naked, defenseless face shows itself and is seen—is more often than not described as the work of love" (Bauman, 1995, pp. 59–60).

Bauman's depiction of turning toward our moral selves and the welcoming of others to develop mutuality and trust is upended by the globalized culture of exploitation,

greed, and brutality. People in industrialized countries search for ways to numb down, fit

in and protect themselves from the onslaught of expectations and ethical codes of

behavior. It takes incredible courage, bravery and patience to be open to forms of

togetherness that threaten the security of like-minded communities. Breaking through the

fixed cultural discourses of fear, emotional disengagement and self-hatred to *create*

spaces for social interaction and togetherness that encourage everyone to act on moral

choices is a practice of radical democracy.

Bauman believes emotional engagement *with* the *other* is essential before

commitment is possible. A radical openness to the other without the certainty of

assumptions can only occur in a world where *no universal rules apply.* Being connected

to the other through emotional engagement, we become responsible for her or him, as a

moral choice.

According to Bauman (1995), being-for is about living-towards-the-future, being

filled with anticipation, and aware of the gap between the future foretold and the future

that may eventually occur. Although imagining the future is filled with anxiety, this

hopeful and inconclusive stretching-toward the future gives us the renewed strength

to go forward to find communion with others while working toward radical democracy

to come.

Identity and Difference

In John Caputo's book *Deconstruction in a Nutshell: A Conversation with Jacques Derrida* (1997)*,* Derrida expresses concern with clinging to fixed concepts of identity, exclusion, and narrow nationalism. Narrow nationalism embodies the principle of what Caputo terms "identitarianism" or a self-protective, self-affirming identity, based on setting up boundaries to prevent "others" from crossing self-defined borders (Caputo, 1997).

By focusing on notions of one's pure culture, ideology, or some sort of pure *unity against* others, we perpetuate a narrow self-interest and the stagnation of future growth and possibility. By prioritizing individual liberty while turning our backs on the consequences of our own freedoms, we cling to fantasies of progress, exploits, consumption and success. In so doing, we prevent a broader, more inter-textual, and more open-ended moral and ethical approach to creating and living democratic life.

From Derrida's own experience as an Algerian Jew whose family immigrated to Spain, he speaks of being an "over-colonized European to being internally differentiated" marked by a "difference with itself." He warned of the dangers of settling into comfortable notions of belonging while shutting others out. He advocates for a cultivation of a culture of self-differentiation … rather than cultivate "colonies of the same within cultures of identity which gathers itself to itself in common defense against the other" (Caputo, p. 115).

While there are many wonderfully hard-working and exemplary organizations working for social and environmental change in Greensboro, N.C., where I now reside, there are also many, who exemplify Derrida's critique of colonies of the same. Many focus exclusively on one issue while disregarding the larger systemic issues of globalization, market-based culture and the interrelationship of class, gender, and geographical location. Turf wars exist for competition over power, control and leadership.

My experience within academia is that a similar set of exclusionary and hierarchical behavior often prevails among many academics— who creating clear boundaries between themselves and others who are judged to be incapable of "getting it." Taking the eradication of systemic poverty, war, racism and destruction of the earth seriously requires a different way of living democracy—a radical openness to others— letting go of the superiority and certainty of one's own truth. Unknowingly, more people are driven away than drawn in to a space where meaning can be negotiated, mediated, shared, and co-created with others.

People need to be inspired into working toward new possibilities for the development of intercultural and intergenerational networks that prioritize collective, democratic problem solving with others to determine future tasks. While it is not the focus of this paper to go deeply into organizational structure and behavior of community organizing, I believe the seriousness of the global crisis requires a major shift in prioritizing and bridging collective work. Identifying ways that organizations working

toward radical change stand in the way of renewing and regenerating the cultural and environmental commons will be explored in future work.

Welch (2004) believes all forms of domination are masked under the guise of "benevolent leadership" with the good intentions of exercising one's power to limit another's power. Concealed is the arrogance and self-righteousness of self-deluded acts of dominance that we ourselves commit in the name of pursuing justice and truth. She warns of the triple fires of greed, hatred and delusion that live within us all. What would happen if we all focused as consistently and with humility on our own ability to do harm and power to work for the mutual benefit of all of life?

Democratic communities of solidarity and trust cannot be maintained without an openness to the incoming of others with a humility that acknowledges the ways we all can be destructive to new possibilities and ways of understanding the world. Diversity and difference, in all their forms, become a place where possibilities open-up to establish practices that deepen the project of a critical democracy and increase the opportunities for a broader, deeper understanding of cultural difference, solidarity, mutuality, compassion, generosity and trust (Giroux, 1995).

The difference that Derrida discusses is deeply intercultural, multi-racial, or, as Caputo terms, "polymorphic" (Caputo, 1997, p. 107). He advocates for democracy that is a generous space for all possible differences imaginable, including "highly heterogeneous, porous, self-differentiating, quasi-identities, unstable identities … that do not close over and form a seamless web of self-same" (p. 107).

The Practice of Ethical Responsibility and Care

In *After Empire: the Art and Ethos of Enduring Peace,* Welch (2004) argues that a basic philosophical tenet of democracy is grounded in an ethic and affirmation of mutual responsibility and community trust. Without an ethic of responsibility, which focuses on the development of solidarity and mutual trust, we will remain mired in division and warring factions, unable to create whole communities that honor all differences. The development of mutuality and trust does not happen without an acceptance of the need to struggle with others for equal redistribution *and* the creation of possibilities that build a future for our children. Accepting mutual responsibility for creating partnerships that celebrate and affirm *all our relations* lays the foundation for collective work ahead.

The practice of creating democracy, according to Welch (2004) is, in part, a practice of creating intersubjective, *mutually accountable* relationships. Intersubjective implies that there are multiple subjects involved within our interactions. People are not simply objects or recipients of our ideas, they must also be the subject of their own story. Our send-and-receive culture deposits information for others to hear without human interaction or face-to-face contact to dialogue, negotiate, and struggle over meaning before action is taken.

Welch (1999) views democracy as an ongoing project that has to be newly created and redefined by each generation in *living context*. She sees this process as one of understanding and participating *deliberately* in a self-critical and reflective process that enables people to learn from each other's differences. Welch advocates for "vibrant

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pluralistic, self-critical, open-ended" relationships and communities engaged in the practice of democracy in our daily lives (p. 93).

Welch argues for practicing democracy with a focus on activity within communities *with* others, helping to bring people together to create mutually agreeable solutions. She discusses democracy as a way of being human that should be nurtured and cultivated, requiring the humility to recognize the ambiguity of our own actions in creating justice.

An ethicist and professor of Religious Studies and Women's Studies, Welch draws on American Indian, Buddhist and other indigenous traditions to explore how people working for social change can learn from past insights while focusing on the present and future challenges. She examines religious and spiritual dimensions learned from indigenous peoples around the world who developed and practiced basic principles of democracy. In her description of the League of Five (later Six Nations of the Hotinonshonni) and their system of governance, she emphasizes the balance of power between men and women and between individual nations and the league. Decisions were made after lengthy discussions. If agreement could not be reached, a 'first do no harm' policy prevailed among all participants. They believed in "healing wrong doers, not defeating them" (Welch, 2004, pp. 34–35).

According to Welch, their system of power avoided the concentration of power into the hands of any one individual and was more focused on a division of power among equals. This division of power among the League of Five appears incompatible with the invasion of colonizers searching for vast resources and wealth beyond reason.

Welch's (2004) belief in social-contract theory is well worth exploring, but will not be covered in this thesis. Her understanding of the necessity of learning from the history of our ancestors and forging reciprocity between people who share in the earth's resources is critical. She writes about the Declaration of Independence in which "governments [derive] their just powers from the consent of the governed." How far we have gone from the ideal of what Abraham Lincoln called shared power "of the people, by the people, for the people" (p. 44). To return to the historical traditions and values of our ancestors to build on the "collective wisdom of humankind" and our natural world requires an understanding of our obligations toward each other and the earth we call our home.

Welch (2004) advocates for a system in which social action is rooted in wisdom, compassion, and the humility of recognizing our own limits and limitations. She refers to the Buddhist way of understanding as a function of opening for new possibilities, not as an end in itself.

Shapiro (2006) focuses on the need for human connectedness that binds all beings with an emphasis on mutual reciprocity, dignity, and respect. He points to the perpetuation of a culture of violence, manufactured by global market ideology as a major obstacle. As young people become increasingly immune to violent entertainment and video games, they develop a cool detachment and indifference to others, with "greater excesses of aggressive posturing, misogyny," and a glorification of violence against degraded others (p. 228).

> We have to teach what it means to really listen to the words of others without the immediate intervention of our own beliefs and assumptions. Those often only serve to defend us from having to seriously engage the experience of the other, and block our ability to "walk in the shoes" of someone else (Shapiro, 2006, p. 237).

Creating a world in which difference is respected and valued while simultaneously searching for ways to negotiate and reconcile is a reciprocal process requiring give and take and respect for the needs of others. It requires great humility to place one's own needs aside when considering others, especially when they may require more careful attention. It is a complex interdisciplinary, democratic practice in which mutual respect and an ethic of care must prevail for all. Engaging in critical citizenship begins with a willingness to hear each other's stories, and an affirmation of one's right to be heard. Shapiro takes this notion further by making clear that a willingness to listen to another's story is insufficient without the ability to *take it to heart*.

> Being a human who takes responsibility for their interspecies location in this way requires avoiding both the arrogance of reading in your own location and perspective as that of the other, and the arrogance of assuming that you can 'read as the Other', know their lives as they do, and in that sense speak or see as the other. (Plumwood, 2005, p. 205)

Martusewitz and Edmundson, (2004) believe diversity must also be understood as a *motivating generative force* in all life systems, not simply a matter of social and cultural systems. The development of democratic and sustainable communities depends on a respect for the biological and cultural systems through an ethic of care and responsibility. The authors believe the engagement of ethical responsibilities that are oriented toward the

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protection of all life systems is the best way to engage with others about how to live within and create just and sustainable communities.

The assumption that nature is the base of support for production, accumulation, and exploitation contributes to our inability to allow the natural process to unfold, renew, and reproduce itself. Plumwood (2002) discusses the dangers of economic rationalism that call for laisez-faire neo-liberalism and economic fundamentalism—privileging the abstract over the contextual and experiential. Universal formulas are created that establish the subordination of others, other species, and nature itself with seemingly rational explanations for their exploitation. These universal stories are planted into the public consciousness through media and market-based forms of cultural persuasion.

Assumptions that prioritize material economic success, consumption and individual liberation crowd out our collective concern for living relationships and care for the world as well as our ability to find each other to create communities of solidarity and trust. With a greater ecological grounding of the human/earth connection outside of the need for dualistic certainty and control, domination and submission, an organic sense of community can spring forth to develop our collective strengths and interdependence as alternatives to the destructive forces of empire.

The Paradox of Democracy

The need to affirm difference while searching for community and commonality and understanding the consequences of our own *freedoms* is explored by Chantal Mouffe

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(2000) in her book *The Democratic Paradox.* Mouffe calls for a widening and deepening understanding of democracy that goes beyond simple, sometimes superficial pluralism. She makes a distinction between democracy as a form of rule taking into consideration the sovereignty of the people *and* as a liberal symbolic framework with a strong emphasis on the value of individual liberty and human rights.

Mouffe (2000) argues that these two democratic traditions commonly thought of as principles of democracy conflict with each other and yet coexist in an uneasy and unsolvable tension. There is no necessary relationship between these two distinct Straditions of democracy—the defense of human rights on the one hand and democratic pluralism on the other. Mouffe believes it is essential to come to terms with these two different logics of the democratic paradox to envision ways to understand and deal with them constructively (Mouffe, 2000, p. 4).

There is no guarantee that a decision made through a democratic or pluralistic process will not jeopardize the democratic rights of certain individuals or groups. By recognizing the tension between these two logics, we are better able to realize that the process is less than pure. Rather, it is one of continuous interrelationship between the principles of equality on the one hand and of liberty on the other.

An understanding of the paradoxical nature of liberal democratic practice includes an acceptance of tension between these two related phenomena. By existing in the same space, each changes the meaning of the other; neither perfect liberty nor perfect equality becomes possible. These two ideas exist in a necessary tension, striving for balance that cannot be resolved in finality.

Mouffe suggests this realization creates the possibility for a more pluralist *and* inclusive "form of human co-existence in which rights can exist *and* be exercised," while also acknowledging the need to continue to broaden our scope and understanding of the consequences of our actions (p. 11). Rather than celebrate individual freedoms and rights exclusively, we must also be aware of how an expression of rights can simultaneously exist at the expense of others and the land that nurtures and feeds us.

Mouffe (2000) warns of the dangers of seeking harmony at the expense of denying the necessity of struggle. She urges recognition of difference as a condition of the possibility of being. According to Mouffe, pluralism is not a fact but an "axiological principle" we should celebrate and enhance (p. 19). She advocates for a type of radical pluralism that reinforces the necessity of difference and questions principles of objectivity, unanimity, and homogeneity, which are all based on acts of exclusion.

For the practice of democracy to succeed within communities, according to Mouffe (2000), no social agent should be able to claim any mastery of the foundations of society. *Relationships* between people with diverse social agency thus become more democratic to the extent that they begin to accept their own particular issues and the limitations of their claims as part of a larger whole. The critical question then becomes not how to eliminate power "but how to constitute forms of power which are compatible with democratic values" (pp. 21–22).

Mouffe disputes the prevailing approach to political theory that is dominated by rationalist and individualist perspectives. Rather than *reduce* democratic practice to one of deliberation and dialogue seeking common ground, she emphasizes the search for

collective practices and identities that enable a transformation of antagonism (implying oppositional, mutually exclusive practices) into an acceptance of agonism (implying the need to struggle over difference). Instead of viewing politics as an adversarial, and contentious struggle between mutually exclusive interests and parties seeking to destroy each other *or* find a common, watered-down middle ground, an acceptance of agonistic and, sometimes, anguished struggle creates the possibility of new political frontiers capable of reinvigorating democratic and counter-hegemonic strategies that further the project of democratic life.

By developing an understanding of the systemic connections between global market forces and the consequences of environmental, social, and economic destruction, we are able to appreciate what Mouffe (2000) declares as the constitutive role of relations of power. How power is constituted is central to an understanding of democratic practice. It's not possible to dialogue in search of a common good without understanding that we live in a world that is structured by social inequality and division. Recognizing the complex structure of the relations of power and how they are constituted is critical in any discussion of democratic rights and responsibilities, ethical responsibility, and mutual care.

A shallow focus on a wide range of competing interest groups within a democracy searching for recognition or common ground is insufficient without an understanding of the hegemonic role that class interests and forms of domination play in structures of power. I concur with Mouffe (2000) that without challenging the existing power of transnational globalization at its core, a discussion of local and global democracy is

incomplete. I turn now to a discussion of the constitutive power of market-based

relations.

Free Market Neo-Liberal Democracy

> Every part of this earth is sacred to my people. Every shining pine needle, Every
> sandy shore, every mist in the dark woods, every clearing and humming insect is holy
> in the memory and experience of my people … This we know. The earth does not
> belong to man, man belongs to the earth. This we know. All things are connected like
> the blood, which unites our family. All things are connected.
> (Chief Seattle of the Suquamish tribe, 1848, reprinted in Shiva, 2005, p.1)

We live in times of great peril. As peoples of the earth struggle for survival in a

deeply distrustful world filled with divisions of religious intolerance, hatred, polarization,

and fear, it becomes increasingly more difficult to find each other—to find ways to create

communities of solidarity and trust amid a parallel universe of consumption, competition,

ego fulfillment, and a haunting silence toward the suffering of others. With a greater

awareness of our connections to the earth, I believe we must become more resolutely

focused on bringing about a radical shift in thinking about justice, sustainability, rights

and responsibility.

Jeanette Armstrong, an Okanagan who lived on the Penticton Indian Reservation

in British Columbia, spoke with Jensen (2004) about the profound capacity of humans to

create understanding. "When you create understanding, you lay waste to all conflict" (p.

282). Armstrong relays the experience of the Okanagan people to decolonize themselves

by decolonizing the myths that perpetuate consent to domination. Understanding who we

are, who we have become, and the myths that perpetuate illusions that maintain acquiescence is a critical process of resisting the control of market forces.

Understanding our own particular and collective history is critical to the creation of alternative communities that nourish and affirm all of life. Part of this understanding includes the many ways people consent to our own domination and willingly surrender our own freedoms. Destroying the enemy by becoming the enemy will not bring about lasting change. It will simply prolong fighting against each other forever and ever.

I believe an awareness of the hegemonic dominance of corporate globalization must be included in any attempt to nurture democratic relations of shared power, agency, mutuality, and care. Corporate ownership of the land and our natural resources provides a backdrop that creates cultures of competition, greed, brutality, and silence. The new "ownership society" commodifies human relationships as a drive for things and market values over people, place, and community. Profit-driven globalization fosters cultures of despair, exclusion, scarcity, and violence. As more and more people are driven from their land, excluded from life-support systems, and deprived of a secure way of life, they are driven toward more desperate and extremist responses for survival.

A culture of competition and greed brought about by an ownership society subverts the possibility of democratic practices that are open to the incoming of the other and the recognition of the peoples of the world's common needs for food, land, water and shelter. Through media fear-mongering and scapegoating we are persuaded to blame and demonize *others*, who are constructed as a threat to our identity and security. As a result, we expend a good deal of time *reacting* to the deeds of others rather than recognizing the

mutual needs of the whole earth family who require our solidarity, respect, understanding, hospitality and humility.

Non-linear ways of understanding emphasize the ecology of *relationships* within whole systems. To the extent that there is always *the other* to blame, we delude ourselves by holding on to comfortable myths that prevent a radical shift in our consciousness and actions. People, animals, and all of life become objects to be used for instrumental gain—instead of *communed with* and cared for as part of a larger earth family. By placing our ears closer to the ground (Peltier, 1999) we can begin to experience the sounds of our universe pulsing and vibrating and calling out for our participation and engagement in the family of life.

Market globalization breeds religious, economic, and other forms of fundamentalism. The spread of global markets, and the imposition of "free-trade agreements," and structural-adjustment policies by the World Trade Organization and the International Monetary Fund lead-to economic and environmental destruction of land and resources in Third-World countries. The theft of land and resources belonging to indigenous peoples around the world aggravates extreme poverty, resentment and hatred against the colonizers.

The ideology of neo-liberal *free-* market is sold as a way to persuade the consent of the people. Free-market ideology conflates the needs of the people who own the banks and means of production with the needs of the people for control of their own resources and livelihoods. The *freedom* of banks and transnational corporations is guaranteed by international law that prevents local control of resources while protecting their un-

regulated business practices and profits from public scrutiny or review, and by standing armies ready to suppress uprisings against "the invaders." Their freedom to extract resources in other countries is maintained by free-market ideology that falsely confuses their freedom with *others* they are exploiting.

Transnational globalization erodes equality, justice, and democratic control of local resources. Unbound market forces such as *free-trade* agreements are primary sources of uncertainty and insecurity for an expanding number of people around the globe. The unbridled expansion of corporate control through free-market liberalism is packaged and disguised as expanding democracy and freedom through shallow consumer choices. We are free, after all, to choose between McDonald's and Wendy's, between Toyota and Ford, but not to control our own local resources, and, increasingly for women, our own bodies.

Stuart Hall (1996) argued that market-based relationships "dissolve the bonds of sociality and reciprocity" that nurture a sense of obligation to others, which is the life blood of family, kinship ties, and community affinity. The threat of a consistently declining job market and ongoing unemployment, as well as the insecurity and instability of market forces, lead to the fear and anxiety that create a more submissive populace. Such a permanent threat, while dangling unending material enticements, is what leads to obedience, passivity, and consent of those dominated. Under the guise of liberty and liberal democracy, the "structural violence" of market fundamentalism destroys the possibility of sustaining the connective tissue of community that supports living democratic communities.

In his recent book *America on the Edge* (2006), Giroux notes the critical need for

a revitalization of democratic public life The very notion of a public good has been

redefined as a privatized model of citizenship and the *good life*—that prioritizes

individualistic, self-serving goals at the expense of communal concerns. The Market

place fosters and sustains consumption that "stroke[s] our solitary egos but leaves

unsatisfied our yearning for community" (Barber, 1995, p. 243).

Giroux bemoans the disappearance of public spaces or spheres that provide the

space for citizen participation and collective thought and action. He calls attention to the

decline of democratic values and the growing depoliticization of the "American way of

life" which has become obsessed with individual rights, without an understanding of the

necessity of civic participation and responsibility. The discourse of neo-liberalism

prioritizes profit making and financial wealth are the essence of *a free* democracy.

> virtually all effective institutionalized agencies of collective action join the neo-
> liberal chorus singing the praise of unbound 'market forces' and free trade, the prime
> sources of existential uncertainty, as the 'natural state of mankind'; and unite in
> hammering home he message that letting capital and finances free and giving up all
> attempts to slow down or regulate their erratic movements, is not one political choice
> among many, but a verdict of reason as well as a political necessity. (Bauman, 1999,
> p. 30)

The privatization of everyday life creates fewer and fewer public spaces and

places where collective concerns for ethical and moral responsibility can be negotiated

and shared with others. The collective needs of the public and the growing needs of the

poor and disenfranchised are removed from public consciousness. In its place are

shopping malls, TV, Facebook, and other forms of technology, commercialization and

individualist commodity consumption. With greater dependence on corporate media's interpretation of events and the diversions created by sensationalist stories collective consciousness is blurred as we become blind to our own complicity and addictions.

As the concept of *the public* is compromised, citizens become less and less accountable to each other and less aware of the growing crises facing the world. Giroux (2006) advocates for a revitalization of public life and civic participation that seriously challenge the neo-liberal principles of competition, greed and indifference. "Making private issues public", Giroux urges the creation of civic arenas and open-ended spaces for people to critically negotiate difference, practice democratic decision-making and forge ethical and mutually responsive communities of care (p. 232).

The collapse of the public imagination and the possibility of a vibrant, participatory political culture are celebrated by neo-liberal proponents instead of understood as a dangerous trend toward totalitarianism. "Within neo-liberal discourse, freedom is negatively reduced to freedom from government restraint, and the rights of citizenship translate into the freedom to consume as one chooses" (Giroux, 2001, p. 56).

Nationalizing basic resources such as water, energy, and oil creates a stronger base for democratic values to flourish. Unfortunately, within a neo-liberal discourse it is considered a threat to free people everywhere. Privatized, free-market globalization does not support the democratic values associated with the development of a civic culture that values community, reciprocal relationships, caring, and mutual support.

What is not globalized is a mutual concern for the welfare of others and an expansion of the public good that includes responsibility and care for *all our relations.*

What is globalized is a homogenized culture of consumption, pleasure, and denial—the

individual pursuit of happiness that excludes the concerns and needs of others, and as

Benjamin Barber (1995) so aptly terms the "ideology of having fun" (p. 72).

Bauman (1999) exposes the myth of rugged individualism preached by the

practitioners of the neo-liberal faith as having created "a society getting rid of itself in

order to give free rein to non-social individuals; a body tearing itself to shreds so that

each of its cells, or at least the liveliest among them, can live better on their own" (p. 31).

By developing an understanding of the hegemonic domination of neo-liberal

corporate culture as an obstacle in the pursuit of creating democratic communities of

solidarity and trust, we can become more vigilant of their powerful influence to control

the public mind. Creating collective alternatives to such poisonous, deadening nihilism is

possible by both a greater awareness of the harm done and our own complicity in denying

the effects. The power of persuasion and accommodation to seduce individual pursuits of

shallow liberation through the celebration of libratory practice has become quite

successful in maintaining separation and fragmentation.

Consumerist Cultures of Individualism, Identity, and Nihilism

The capitalist pursuit of unlimited growth and expansion of resource extraction

through the process of globalization drives the maintenance of a hyper-consumerist,

individualist culture. The celebration of individualism and libratory practices, while

appearing to be radical manifestations of marginalized identities, falls short of serious

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transformative practices that have the potential to challenge existing power structures with communities of solidarity and mutuality.

While Bauman (1995) points out the effects of a fragmented and alienated culture; he and others in a variety of disciplines—Martucewitz and Bowers (2006), Plumwood (2002), Chomsky (2003), Jhally (1997), Artz and Ortega Murphy (2000) and Artz and Kamalipour (2003)—point to the ways that cultural hegemony is created to take over public spaces. Persuasive myths of happiness and belonging destroy the possibility of democratic communities. Breaking down the walls of distrust and competition requires a political understanding of capitalist, consumerist relations and how to build the necessary solidarity and trust to create collective and sustainable communities that are inclusive of all our relations.

Artz and Ortega Murphy (2000) believe it is critical to understand consumer culture as a hegemonic way of living. Recognizing the power of hegemonic forms of domination that control living practices and create consent to ideologies that are not life affirming is essential in understanding how emerging cultural practices are capable of resisting such acculturation. Building systemic and interrelated alternative possibilities for countering such cultural practices is emerging on a worldwide scale.

Artz and Ortega Murphy (2000) point to how culture is created as ideology, which provides imaginary systems of representation. They refer to Raymond Williams, a British cultural theorist, who wrote about the concept of hegemony as a collection of beliefs and practices that represent a way of life in totality. Family, politics, education,

entertainment, and media are not separate entities but part of a culture of relationships "that can only be experienced as interlocking patterns, practices and meanings" (p. 60).

Dominant mass culture that perpetuates a celebration of the individual and individualistic pursuits of wealth and fame, while accepting capitalist, consumerist relations, runs counter to the development of democratic communities. Existing institutions of power are adept at accommodating libratory practices and sentiment that appear to support freedom from control, but in reality they are superficial expressions of liberation that do not challenge existing power relations.

Rather, these forms of libratory practice adapt and subconsciously consent to maintain the status quo for the whole of the cultural commons. Cultural hegemony is used to *persuade* consent to practices that subvert human needs and wants, destroy our ability to form collective communities of care, and devastate the livelihoods of others and the earth itself. In essence, we are persuaded to accept our own oppression and domination, and destruction.

The cult of the liberated individual is a seductive form of hegemonic persuasion that celebrates progress and narcissism at all costs. We are led toward continual renewal, the need to consume, possess and improve unnecessary *stuff* that will exceed our wildest dreams for love, friendship, belonging, etc. The illusion of freedom and *liberation* has been incorporated into the American dream. Instead we have become more obedient and passive to the control of market forces that destroy life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness for everyone. "Me and my family" has become a tribal expression of non-community, maintaining circles of the same that disregard the massive suffering of

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others. Freedom for a few leads to destruction of the world community whose food, water, and air is being destroyed by a culture of consumption and individualist liberation.

To change existing power dynamics, it is essential to understand the power of consumer culture as a hegemonic way of living. Recognizing the power of hegemonic forms of domination that control living practices and consent to ideologies that are not life affirming is critical in developing emerging cultural practices—practices capable of creating living, loving, and more inclusive, democratic communities. Resisting such acculturation requires the creation of democratic alternatives that *affirm life* and inspire others to join in imagining and creating a more just and sustainable world.

Plumwood (2002) points to hyperbolized forms of autonomy and liberation as hegemonic constructions that legitimize denials of dependency. She includes our dependency on nature and other forms of rationalist critique that marginalize emotional connections and care for all of life. Without such ethical concerns, free-market liberalism will continue to dominate other substantive and distributive democratic projects. Focusing exclusively on linear and separated identity issues without challenging existing free-market relations does not begin to confront the systems of power that dominate and destroy life.

The breakdown of cultural connectedness, as discussed in Chapter I, is a result of living within a culture that prioritizes the pursuit of things and *individual freedoms* and accomplishments over people and community. Perpetuating myths of endless individualist recognition, technological progress, and progress itself as the solution to our woes maintains the disconnectedness and competitive spirit that prevent the development

of mutually responsible communities. The challenge of our times is to develop

democratic communities that value collective decision-making, mutual respect, and an

ethic of care and mutual responsibility. Understanding the power of the market-based

culture of individualism and consumerism to destroy and divide is critical.

Participatory, Communicative, and Redistributive Democratic Practice

> A political structure that aimed to hear the bad news from below could not just rely on hoping to *represent* 'below' in apparently fair communicative processes, even where they are open to wide expressions of cultural difference. … Rather such a structure would need to *eliminate* class as a position of silence and radical marginality, and would need to adopt substantial social equality as a major redistribution and transformative objective. (Plumwood, 2002, p. 96)

Plumwood argues that democracy can only be truly participatory at the level of

face-to-face community. We need institutions that encourage speech from below,

inclusive of all beings, with "deep forms of democracy where communicativeness and

redistributive equality are found across a range of social spheres" (p. 65).

Plumwood distinguishes between what she terms *shallow* forms of liberal

democracy and deeper forms that include a dimension of justice known as *redistributive*

equality. She points to the level of closeness or remoteness to decision-making within

communities as a factor in one's ability to feel the consequences of decisions made. If all

members of a democracy provide input into the decision-making process, then there

would be a low level of remoteness and greater interconnectedness.

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Plumwood (2002) combines inequality with geographical remoteness as a force that generates excellent conditions for *epistemic remoteness*. As a result, major barriers to knowledge are created while offering huge opportunities for redistributing eco-harms onto others. Such a process avoids the knowledge and responsibility of consumers and producers concerning the ecological circumstances and consequences, and an acceptance of responsibility (p. 81).

The logic of the global market can treat those who are the least privileged as those who have the least to lose. As a result they become most expendable in the eyes of those in power and to the many who consent to such logic. The least privileged economically are most likely to feel the worst impacts of global deforestation, pollution, waste dumping, and unequal access to resources, although they can appear invisible to others who are removed from understanding or directly experiencing such impacts.

Free-market liberalism is based on maximizing the self-interests of a few players at the top of the pyramid while disregarding the interests of the many who struggle to survive at the increasingly expanded bottom. *Voices from below* who have been excluded or damaged by a flawed communicative process that excludes their participation are not able to protest their own disenfranchisement. The illusion of fairness and adequacy can therefore so easily prevail as hegemonic assumptions perpetuate the interests of dominant groups. Plumwood asks her readers to imagine a democratic process in which everyone has a genuine and equal opportunity to communicate their needs and, as a result, substantive and distributive equality prevail (Plumwood, 2002, p. 95).

Hegemonic conceptions of human agency that deny all these others, women, the colonized, the "hired hands," and nature, are linked to denials of dependency which are in turn linked to the application of inappropriate strategies and forms of rationality that aide to maximize the share of the 'isolated' self and neglect the need to promote mutual flourishing. (p. 34)

Plumwood (2002) discusses many frameworks of understanding the problems of democracy and equity. Economic liberals and other rationalists imply that the global market hasn't gone deeply enough into the world's markets. They want to expand free-market liberalism that destroys whole cultures and eco-systems in the name of *freedom.* Marxists say the driver is the economic system of capitalism and anarchists blame the coercive forces of the state. Radical feminists blame patriarchal relations, while anti-racists blame colonization and white privilege as the underlying causes of inequality.

Plumwood believes that each angle is limiting in scope, as each applies rationalist, reductionist thinking to complex *inter-systems analyses* that would include many diverse frameworks of meaning in *dialogical relationship.* She draws attention to the substantial inequality that exists both locally and globally within communities embedded in larger communities that are increasingly controlled by fewer and fewer people.

Solidarity, Mutuality, and Responsibility

Because humankind is capable of brutality, violence and exclusion, it is critical to be aware of how easily harmony can be lost. Rather than settling in to a moral certainty in overcoming evil, Welch advocates a more fluid, open, and responsive way of interacting within communities, a letting go of one's deterministic view of desired outcomes. Welch

(1999) believes we must understand our own misuse of power and when our own communities are abusing power. The humility of self-critical awareness allows for the possibility of imagining other forms of relationship and projects with others (50).

Living democracy requires speaking truth to power with humility, awe and wonder, and care for the surrounding universe. By assuming the role of merely challenging and critiquing systems of power by delivering one's own truth, we delude ourselves and project onto others what we ourselves may lack the courage to risk. Welch argues that unrelenting social critique is a failure of intellect, creativity, and solidarity. She urges her readers to own their power, agency, and responsibility to play constructive roles in responding to the challenges we face while remaining humble in our relationships with others, and the earth community.

According to Welch, agency requires a cultivation of respect that is holistic and incorporates political, spiritual, and cultural transformation. She emphasizes the need for deep cultural reorganization rather than simple policy changes to an existing, oppressive power structure. Replacing a culture of competition and dominance—from dualistic forms of identity and morality to exploring opportunities to create a more open-ended, pluralistic society—requires emotional and physical strength, resilience, and *imagination* (Welch, 1999, p. 88).

Welch refers to Native American stories and ritual practice that express a respect for the ways we are all held accountable for making choices that destroy the earth, deplete our natural resources, and generate conflict. Knowing how quickly harmony can

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be lost, we must pay attention to our own unintentional capacity to do harm and destroy the potential for love and harmony to flourish.

Plumwood (2002) calls for a new ethic of respect that combines continuity and difference, self and other in a dynamic tension. Respect for what Derrida termed *the other,* of which nature is often excluded, requires recognition of difference as well as boundaries. She makes a clear distinction between appropriating the other while assuming some abstract understanding of unity from the notion of solidarity which she describes as positioning one's self *with* others and in support of them. "Standing with the other, in supportive relationships is about *solidarity with* the other, while recognizing the oppressive nature of unity and attempts at merger" (Plumwood, 2002, p. 202).

Recognizing how we are positioned differently is critical in understanding that most people suffer from some form of oppression within while concurrently engaged in oppressive acts towards others. This forces recognition that one can be an oppressor under certain circumstances and oppressed under others. For example African American academics may experience discrimination in academia, but in their classrooms they have authority over their students of all ethnicities.

The complexity of how people are multiply-positioned within life is further complicated by an assumption of human superiority over nature. Equally critical is an understanding of the many ways we seek homogeneity in colonizing self-protective communities of sameness that block the "incoming" of others. Without the humility of accepting our own errors and blockages that prevent the opening to others, we

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unintentionally sabotage the possibility of creating communities of mutuality, solidarity, and trust.

An ethic of solidarity and mutuality converge to emphasize an alternative to neo-liberal democracy, which emphasizes agency and shallow participatory ideas of democracy. Plumwood (2002) emphasizes that many notions of "unity" leave out an ethic of care, mutual respect, and solidarity. In essence, they end up accommodating existing power structures rather than changing them.

The exclusion of the natural world in discussions of dominant forms of power is an example of how *cultures of the same* blindly shut out other cultures in and justify their own unintended domination. An eco-justice framework includes an understanding of diversity as a *generative force* and as a motivating factor in all life systems, including but not centering on human cultural systems.

In her interview with Derrick Jensen (2004), Jeanette Armstrong discusses the overemphasis of "rights" within a community rather than a consideration of responsibilities. In the Okanagan world in which she lives, "her right" translates to "her truth," meaning an acceptance as being part of a family and community and the surrounding natural world. Armstrong explains that in Okanagan culture rights translate into responsibilities—more than just a law someone wrote that determines what we are owed. The only way to have rights is to be part of a community or collective that requires responsibility to it. Living within a community means being born with a connection and being responsible to that connection as part of a greater whole. Armstrong believes that

how we view ourselves in relation to others has to do with responsibilities for the

common preservation of all our relationships.

> We are not separate beings, you and I.
> You are me and I am you
> and we are they and they are us.
>
> This is how we're meant to be,
> each of us one,
> each of us all.
>
> When you reach across the void of otherness to me,
> And you touch your own soul. (Peltier, 1999, p. 213)

Armstrong (in Jensen, 2004) considers that in Western cultures, a right is called a

right because it is expressed and enforced outside of the community from either

governing entities or external enforcement agencies. It can be used to maintain what she

views as a construction of non-rights. As nation-states, governments, and legal systems

talk about rights, Armstrong believes "they're about making sure the individual doesn't

have the ability to be, in the true sense, responsible, that the individual can only be

responsible for select things" (p. 293).

> If people could feel themselves to be a part of the world in a real sense for just one
> moment, devoid of all the constraints that we've created and constructed around us
> that stop us from feeling that, from understanding and knowing it, if they could
> experience that, it would change their processes, their approaches to things, their
> approach to themselves. (Armstrong, 2004, p. 295)

As human beings we are part of a community, a collective humanity, and earth

community. Armstrong believes that how we, as individuals, develop our connections

and process this throughout our bodies is the living context of our lives. If we lose an understanding and appreciation of our rootedness in connection within our communities and with the land, we lose a connection to our own source, the spirit or generative force in which we are embedded and gain sustenance. The process of creating a space for responsibility to be practiced as a form of empowerment includes asking ourselves, "What are we prepared to do about it?"

Revitalizing the Commons

In his work *Revitalizing the Commons, Cultural and Educational Sites of Resistance and Affirmation,* Bowers (2006) believes future prospects for survival lie in a revitalization of the ancient cultural practice that views the commons as the environment that is available for use for the whole community. Bowers argues we must begin to pay more attention to what we want to affirm and preserve. Notions of liberalism and conservatism as opposing "political visions of what constitutes a just society" (p. 114), keep us separate in warring factions over ideology and opposition toward each other. Instead, he urges us to first consider what we want to preserve with greater precision as we address the cultural roots of the current economic, social, and ecological crisis.

This view is in stark contrast to economic transnational globalization that considers the planet as private property to be explored, conquered, and exploited. Bowers, Shiva (2005), Kahn (2008), Martusewitz (2009), Cavanaugh and Mander (2004) and others around the world are resisting the destruction of our biological and cultural

diversity, land, food, and livelihoods. Thriving movements for localization as an alternative to globalization are bubbling up all over the world.

Corporate globalization is based on *enclosing the commons*, containing living democracies, and limiting diversity while suppressing the possibility to nurture our communities into wholeness. The privatization of public goods and services dispossesses people and cultures of their land and cultural roots. Safe homogeneous cultures enclose all who consent. An expansion of the culture of competition and consumerism creates hegemonic control of the world through dominant forms of persuasion that destroy potential for collective solidarity and action. The process of economic globalization transforms local cultures, turning public resources into privatized commodities to be "owned" by a small percentage of wealthy profiteers.

Through neoliberal discourse, the very notion of democracy has been conflated with laissez-faire capitalism and freedom from control (or regulation). While conservatism and liberalism are placed as binary opposites within Western political societies Bowers (2006) argues that *free-market liberalism* is actually celebrated by both *progressive* liberals and conservatives. He points to the contradictions of Western assumptions about liberalism and conservatism as conceptual agendas used by politicians to guide their reform efforts. Rather than continue to think in polarizing, dualistic, exclusive terms about notions of liberalism and conservatism that maintain division, a systems approach enables a deeper, intertextual understanding of the contradictions and the commonalities.

A false separation based on identity and cultural practice is created among people who are otherwise connected economically, culturally, and ecologically. Enclosures create exclusions and lead to exclusionary practices that falsely identify *the other* as the enemy. These exclusions are the hidden cost of corporate globalization and our own consent to market-driven relationships and communities.

The ancient commons required local systems of decision-making that were inclusive of intergenerational knowledge and included a recognition, appreciation, and gratitude to the earth. The privatization of our water, airwaves and communication systems, entertainment, health care, and educational systems leads to the development of a consciousness that alters our ability to imagine other possibilities outside of market relations. The numbing influence of hyper-consumerist culture creates a screen of ephemeral contentment that masks our disconnection from the earth.

By understanding the necessity of collective action based on mutual and changing needs of the whole planet for survival we can more effectively challenge policies and practices that privatize and enclose the commons. The collective voices and sounds of the whole community commons represent the full expression of living democracy. Democracy to come, democracy that does not annihilate difference, solidarity, and trust is democracy that maintains agonism while working toward greater harmony and sustainability. Diversity in all its manifestations and expressions is a necessary force as we struggle against the homogenization of culture and cultural belief systems.

Bowers (2006) argues that the industrial forces that are undermining what remains of the commons must be challenged by an understanding of the multiple dimensions of

life within the community. These dimensions are rooted in an understanding of the traditions of intergenerational knowledge; physical environment we share; and our interconnections with each other.

An understanding of various forms of intergenerational knowledge is critical in broadening the concept of diverse cultural ways of knowing. Bowers asks us to consider the diverse ways people experience meaning and the values they base their lives on. One of our greatest tasks as educational and community leaders is to identify which cultural traditions contribute to a revitalization of the commons and which ones do not. How do people in communities find genuine alternatives to enclosure and its effects that avoid the deep cultural assumptions of liberal democracy—individualism, progress in consumption, and freedom from the web of life?

I believe one of our greatest challenges is to create open-ended, inclusive, and pluralistic communities that demand self-reflection, mutuality, and trust with an understanding of the many unintended consequences of our own actions. The search for harmony must not blind us to the need to find ways to accept the necessity of conflict and struggle as ways to hold each other mutually accountable outside of dominant hierarchical relationships.

Living Democracy

> Living democracy enables democratic participation in all matters of life and death—the food we eat or do not have access to; the water we drink or are denied due to privatization or pollution; the air we breathe or are poisoned by. Living democracies are based on the intrinsic worth of all species, all peoples, all cultures; a just and equal sharing of this earth's vital resources; and sharing the decisions of the earth's resources. (Shiva, 2005, p. 6)

In contrast to the trend toward market fundamentalism and the resulting hyper-separation, there are people and movements coming together to defend the planet as a commons shared by all. The earth family and community include all beings, belief systems, and classes of people. Vandana Shiva, a world-renowned environmental activist and physicist, calls the undemocratic effects of globalization "ownership of the rich based on the dispossession of the poor" (p. 2). Shiva describes Earth Democracy as an evolving consciousness of our interconnectedness to each other within local communities and to the entire universe as a whole. This idea is shaped by "the multiple and diverse practices of people reclaiming their commons, their resources, their livelihoods, their freedoms, their dignity, their identities and their peace" (Shiva, 2005, p. 5).

Shiva talks of living cultures*, living democracies*, and living economies, which combine and interrelate on a local and worldwide scale. Corporate globalization encourages short-term solutions based on maximum profits without regard for human dignity or long-term ecological concerns. Shiva believes that our ecological security is our most basic security as we strive to take back control of the food we eat, the water we drink, and the very air we breathe.

In Earth Democracy every being has equal access to the earth's resources that make life possible; this access is assured by recognizing the importance of the other two economies … nature's economy and the sustenance economy. (Shiva, 2005, p. 13)

Revitalizing Earth Democracy involves the participation of global citizens striving for economic and ecological survival and increasing our interconnections and interdependency, our mutual compassion, and solidarity. Living democracy is the space where we exercise our common responsibilities and defend basic human rights. It is a space where the paradox of democracy that Mouffe (2000) discusses is practiced and struggled over as the best possibility for human and ecological survival.

Shiva's concept of living democracy is based on the recovery of our connections to the earth. It best reflects current, worldwide struggles of diverse people and movements who are working for economic and ecological justice.

Remembering that we are earth citizens and earth children can help us recover our common humanity and help us transcend the deep division of intolerance, hate, and fear that corporate globalization's ruptures, polarization, and enclosures have created. (Shiva, p. 7)

Practicing democracy as a lived experience, an ideal that we strive for in our daily relationships, requires letting go of the need to control others. The practice of self-reflection and humility reveals the ways we ourselves can impede the ability of others to experience the joy and wonder of new possibilities for collective action.

It's not enough to uproot what exists and expose the culprits. We must replace it with alternative practices and ways of knowing as something we *do* consistently in our

daily lives. Deconstruction and critique of the disastrous effects of transnational market

fundamentalism is important. Bringing to light the many ways others are oppressed and

harmed by existing systems is critical. By joining, encouraging, and mentoring new

generations we become creators of alternative and competing possibilities to replace,

renew, and regenerate. This requires a bridge between theory and practice, a bridge

between people who make money talking about theories and people on the ground doing

the work of the world, "common as mud" (Piercy, 1989, p.106).

An understanding of diverse forms of intergenerational knowledge and values on

which people base their lives is critical to deepening democracy as a generative force.

One of our greatest tasks as educational and community leaders is to identify which

cultural traditions contribute to a revitalization of the commons and which do not. How

do people find genuine alternatives to enclosure and its effects that avoid the deep

cultural assumptions of liberal democracy—individualism, the illusion of progress, and

exploitation of resources for consumption at any cost?

Francis Moore Lappe (2007) discusses living democracy as a set of system-

qualities that shape and nurture our daily lives. Values such as inclusion, mutual

accountability and respect, solidarity, love, and fairness become infused in our daily

lives. It is a promise that we strive for in our daily work, as we struggle to maintain a

balance between differentiation and bonding, self and community, and humans and

nature, body and mind.

In *Blessed Unrest* (2006), Hawken asks what if we are entering a transitional

phase of human development during which what works is invisible because most heads

are turned toward the security of the past. What if some very basic values are being instilled worldwide that foster complex social webs of meaning that represent the future of governance (p. 26)? Just what those values entail requires face-to-face dialogue, an acceptance of agonism, and open-ended, inclusive practices that affirm and preserve that which sustains life while understanding the many ways solidarity can be lost. It requires complex inter-systems analyses that includes ways of knowing and being in the world as well as appreciation of the multiple contexts in which we are embedded.

Shaping a culture of democracy also requires slowing down for trust to develop over time, deepening the possibilities for stronger, more solidifying, and yet fluid relationships to emerge. Creating communities of care and respect take time and great patience in recognizing the small acts and steps taken that heal, mend, and support future work together.

Plumwood (2002) talks of political solidarity with the earth and its inhabitants that go beyond instrumentalism. She calls for a new ethic of respect that combines continuity and difference as well as self and other in dynamic tension. This concept of dynamic tension is similar to Moffe's discussion of the paradox of democracy, as well as Thomas Berry's concept of creative disequilibrium and Derrida's of a practice a democracy to come.

There are no linear prescriptions that assure the development of democratic culture capable of creating and sustaining all of life. No universal rules apply for all cultures at all times. I believe we must continue to struggle over diverse intercultural and intersubjective ways of experiencing the world and with the questions of what it means to

be human in a world gone mad with hatred and violence, death, and destruction. To this

end, I offer the list below of values and practices that nurture the democratic spirit,

proposed by Frances Moore Lappe (2007) as the "ten arts of democracy."

ART ONE: ACTIVE LISTENING
Encouraging the speaker and searching for meaning

ART TWO: CREATIVE CONFLICT
Confronting others in ways that produce growth

ART THREE: MEDIATION
Facilitating interaction to help people in conflict hear one another

ART FOUR: NEGOTIATION
Problem solving that meets some key interests of all involved

ART FIVE: POLITICAL IMAGINATION
Re-imaging our futures according to our values

ART SIX: PUBLIC DIALOGUE
Public talk on matters that concern all

ART SEVEN: PUBLIC JUDGMENT
Public decision-making that enables citizens to make choices they are willing to help
implement

ART EIGHT: CELEBRATION
Expressing joy and gratitude for what we learn and achieve

ART NINE: EVALUATION AND REFLECTION
Assessing and incorporating the lessons we learn through action

ART TEN: MENTORING
Supportive guidance of others in learning these arts of public life

(Lappe, 2007, p. 88)

In Chapter IV, I address diverse forms of pedagogy that I believe are most effective in addressing the critical issues raised in the first three chapters. I explore just how the "arts of democracy" suggested by Lappe (2007) can be practiced in our classrooms and daily lives, and what pedagogical approaches are most effective in nurturing new intergenerational communities of care and responsibility.

The needs of the community as a living organism can be affirmed and struggled over though intergenerational forms of communication and living. Given the hyper-separated, fragmented, and destructive culture of consumerism and destruction, the ability of democratic communities to nurture the survival skills necessary among younger generations is critical.

Finding Each Other

Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing
 there is a field. I will meet you there.

When the soul lies down in that grass,
 the world is too full to talk about.
Ideas, language, even the phrase each other
 doesn't make sense. (Rumi in Barks, 1997, p. 98)

Creating democratic communities predicated on self-critical and mutually responsible relationships continually striving for democracy requires an ethic of solidarity and collective care. Breaking down borders around our own self-segregating, increasingly homogeneous communities necessitates great risk and uncertainty. An affirmation of responsibility, rooted in generosity and welcoming of all our relations demands courage

and determination, love, and openness toward others. Outside of right- and wrongdoing, we can find each other to create intersubjective and intergenerational ways of living and loving and working together to do the work of the world.

It's no wonder that so many on our planet suffer from denial, mental illness, and forms of addiction to deaden ourselves from living in such a mind-numbing culture of destruction and despair. Our ability to transcend the deep divisions of hatred, intolerance, fear, and brutality that increasingly dominate the world stage depends on recognizing the enemy within ourselves while struggling with others to remain open to the great possibilities before us to turn the tides. Thinking systemically about communities and the whole of the planet implies inclusiveness, chemistry and poetry (Bateson, 2004, p. 290).

> Sharing what is in our heart brings a welcome shift in identity, as we recognize that the anger, grief, and fear we all feel for our world are not reducible to concerns for our individual welfare, or even survival. Our concerns are far larger than our own private needs and wants. Pain for the world—the outrage and the sorrow—breaks us open to a larger sense of who we are. It is a doorway to the realization of our mutual belonging in the web of life. (Macy, 2008, p. 2)

We are wired to connect. Connecting diverse ways of knowing and understanding with our own intersubjectivity, and how we are differently positioned with an affirmation of our past inheritance must also include a vision of who we can become. The local work of building living communities where democracy is practiced day-to-day is an ethic of love and care for all our relations. An appreciation of how we are embedded within other living systems that we depend on for sustenance and life is critical.

Plumwood (2002) argues that a complex, inter-systems analysis that includes diverse frameworks of meaning in dialogical relationship will best serve the needs of all for equitable distribution, sustainability, and the possibility of joy and celebration. Welch (2006) advocates for an *improvisational ethic of life* that includes a deep appreciation of our surrounding world while continuing to acknowledge the enormity of what humans do not know about the natural world and each other. Martusewicz and Edmundson (2005) urge that an ethic of care and mutual responsibility be nourished in all our relations as a generative force.

Redefining what it means to be human in a world gone mad with greed, death, and destruction requires a reinvigoration of all our senses, habits of heart, and the willingness to risk coming together *with others* to practice cooperative and collective forms of power. Sharing power with all earth inhabitants includes collective responsibility and agency to participate in *the great turning from empire to earth community (*Korten, 2006).

"Power can be wielded with a different logic and ethic. Rather than coercion, we may create a dazzling play of difference that highlights with crystalline clarity the particular strengths of others and ourselves" (Welch, 2006, p. 184). The challenge of creating collective and democratic forms of power over imperial and hierarchical ones requires a shift from "the polarizing dualism and ringing certainties" that stand in the way of the deep cultural shift needed to sustain life (p.183).

The hyper-separation created by market fundamentalism and a culture of extraction and distraction can only be challenged by a culture that clearly understands all

forms of domination and cultural persuasion that seduce our consent and collusion. Replacing hierarchical and mechanistic models of change with more mutual, communicative, and responsive ones that place partnerships, especially our partnership with the earth, on a more sustainable basis requires an understanding of our own ability to do harm.

Also requisite with "crystalline clarity" (Welch, 2006, p.184) is the honoring of the particular strengths of others and our ability to care and protect that which we love. "Out beyond the ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing there is a field. I'll meet you there" (Rumi, in Barks, 1997, p. 98)

CHAPTER IV

NURTURING COMMUNITIES OF CARE AND RECIPROCITY

> I begin from questions that arise out of my life, moments that connect me
> and are embedded in larger cultural processes. I use these questions not as
> a means of universalizing my experiences but rather as a means of moving
> toward an analysis of a larger, more global generative force or spirit that is
> created among humans and between them and the larger living world.
> (Martusewicz, 2010, p. 2)

An Ethic of Responsibility and Care

From a young age, I knew I was destined to teach. Growing up in a large family

surrounded by younger sisters and brothers taught me that there was great joy in being

connected with and caring for others. My younger sisters were captivating and

energizing, and I became fascinated with the developmental process as I watched them

grow and struggle into adulthood. As a family, we spent a great deal of time "in

community" with each other. Wherever we were, we'd have a game going, building forts,

spook houses, waterslides, out door fairs, etc., often involving all the neighborhood

children. The Barrett house was where it was happening, and I learned to thrive among

lots of children of different ages, working things out with each other while creating new

and imaginative ways to play together.

I volunteered to teach preschool-age children in Sunday school and developed a

sense of joy in caring for these delightful and precious little beings. They seemed to take

such pleasure in playing hard and enjoying the finer things in life—being outdoors, storytelling, singing, dancing, painting, laughing, living and loving.

My dad's dinner-table lectures on the importance of democracy and education inspired me to view teaching as a critical social project. I became intent upon creating future generations of joyous and caring human beings capable of working for the good of the whole community.

My parents' moral outrage over injustice and their insistence on mutual care and responsibility fueled my ethical obligation to work for the welfare of others. Teaching became a way to follow my greatest passion. As Dwayne Huebner (1995) points out, "teaching needs to be grounded in life. It is not a way of making a living, but a way of making a life … teaching is a vocation … a vocation is a call" (p. 331). He believes that a teaching life is also a call of and for our students in the work of love, truth, intuition and justice.

> The work of love is obvious. The teacher listens to the student, and speaks with great care, that the gift of language, jointly shared may reassure and disclose a world filled with truth and beauty, joy and suffering, mystery and grace. (Huebner, p. 332)

I answered the call by attending a local teaching college in Trenton, New Jersey, part of a statewide system of teacher colleges designed primarily as preparatory schools for future educators. Most of my classes were not only focused on a given subject but also on how to teach each particular subject to children. I relished this approach to teaching and learning, as it was necessary to communicate what we had learned to others

in its most basic form. In the process I realized the delight my dad took in teaching his

children how things worked and to love the natural gifts of life.

Martusewicz (2001) believes teaching is about the process of creating something

with someone. It's about setting in motion creative forces, a practice of taking "the

responsibility for engaging a selective process, a process of valuing and evaluating

values" (p. 22). Exploring nature with young children, observing worms in the dirt after it

rains, collecting bugs in a jar and observing the sun, moon and clouds overhead was a

joyous way of living life *outloud* in all its natural wonders.

> Attentiveness to the web of life, to the exuberance of children, to the beauty of nature,
> provides a sense of peace, of belonging, of exultation and ecstasy. Attentiveness to
> these forces provides the energy, focus, and a challenging reorientation of our lives.
> (Welch, 2001, p. 179)

We explored the world with our whole bodies, learning and living together in

community, negotiating play and resolving conflicts with care and concern for one

another. This was the "stuff of life" that I valued most, and I felt grateful to find my place

in the world. The act of teaching became a creative and generative force for the good that

filled me with great hope for the future.

A major event in my sophomore year in college further inspired my conviction to

teach. Immediately following the assassination of Martin Luther King on April 4, 1968, I

remember seeing one of my professors walking among her colleagues sobbing

uncontrollably. She had joined a large group of people gathered in a common area on

campus mourning and raging with grief while communing together in an act of solidarity.

Observing one of my cherished professors out in the commons with other community

members—and later as an active participant in a march and rally on campus honoring Dr. King—sparked something deep in my soul. Teachers were political people after all. I chose to teach because I cared about the world and wanted to create more spaces for others to discover their passion and their ability to participate as community members in all of life with responsibility and care.

Shapiro (2006) argues that our greatest human challenge to end the violent nature of our existence and create a culture of peace is an educational one. It became clear to me during the 1960s and '70s—a period in U.S. history when the country was struggling over racial desegregation and the brutality of the Vietnam War— that teaching was about caring for the past, present and future. It's about being part of an intergenerational process, helping to raise new generations of young people who can learn from history and responsibly step up to the existing challenges in life. Nurturing future generations for guardianship and sustainability is about learning to live in common and joyously celebrating life while developing a deep democratic impulse toward mutuality and reciprocity.

The experience of working with young children and their families—the exhilaration of intimate emotional connections made by people caring for each other and the trust developed over time—nurtured my spirit and ability to remain sane in an insane world. I witnessed the inequality of opportunities and unnecessary suffering that sabotaged people's ability to participate in their own renewal collectively with others. Yet the loving, caring and nurturing that I also witnessed in the face of great hardship gave me much to emulate and work toward.

In my first year of teaching, which was in the riot areas of Northwest Washington D.C., I would often return home overwhelmed with despair, unable to fathom how society could look the other way while so many suffered. Over the years as an educator and social worker, I realized how entrenched systemic poverty, violence and degradation had become in our world. In the process I also recognized the great challenge we face of creating an alternative vision that could inspire others to participate more fully in community regeneration.

The prevention and early-intervention programs I had been engaged in with young children and their families were a small piece of a larger challenge. As a political activist, I consistently struggled with the larger questions of what could be done on a broader scale to dismantle the structure of systems that require the perpetuation of war, greed, competition and the annihilation of life.

In this Chapter I explore my own ambiguities, struggle and evolution in becoming a more fiercely engaged and compassionate educator and community member. As I developed the humility of learning from my own mistakes I became more open to the possibility of creating intergenerational communities of mutuality and trust. I reflect on my evolving understanding of diverse ways of knowing and thinking that emerged while teaching for the first time in a patriarchal, Southern culture impacted by the institution of slavery and the residue of distrust and anger that seems to continue to pervade human relationships in the South.

While teaching the class The Institution of Education to future educators, I explored the challenges faced in creating networks of interdependent and democratic

communities capable of building enduring peace and sustainability while challenging systems of power. In this chapter I include the voices of my students as I explore the catalyzing experiences that I believe have the greatest potential to ignite a fundamental shift in consciousness, agency and imaginative possibilities to create democratic communities of care, solidarity and mutual responsibility. As I developed greater intentionality in my own teaching, I became more and more convinced of the importance of embodied teaching and learning.

I also address forms of pedagogy that I believe best engage, inspire and encourage a new generation of leaders, teachers and community members to develop the capacity to imagine and co-create a more loving world. I research and record what cultural and educational practices best forge *collaborative intelligence* (Griffin, 1996), rooted in our participation in larger ecological systems. What is the role of consciousness? How do we cut through the clutter and noise of market fundamentalism and commercialization that maintain a culture of self-centered individualism, consumption, and moral and spiritual disconnectedness?

"We must reconsider our tools, methods and approaches, our politics and economics, our relationships and partnerships, and the very foundations and purposes of education and how they relate to the lives we lead" (UNESCO, 2007, p. 1). Resisting acculturation, while struggling for a more just and sustainable world, requires an investigation of alternative possibilities and of what *can be done* to re-imagine and re-create the future we profess to want. It also requires participatory *and* critical

consciousness, the sense and skills to live in common, and intergenerational and intersubjective relations and practice.

Throughout this chapter I explore diverse ways of knowing as well as the common bonds shared with my students through an ethic of care and responsibility toward a future we share. Exploring the tension between the voices of my students, my academic voice and my own personal experience, I explore my evolving understanding of the development of a more rooted, cultural and ecological perspective. I reflect on the challenges of inspiring participatory, responsible, generous and caring future educators and citizens capable of imagining and working collectively to create living democracy expressed by Vandana Shiva as Earth Democracy (2005).

The Sense to Live in Common

> We are in community with all of the genes and ecosystems of biology; the symbols and reference of philosophy and theology; the archetypes of betrayal and forgiveness and loving and loss that are the stuff of literature, the artifacts and lineages of anthropology…We are in community with all of these great things, and great teaching is about knowing that community, feeling that community, sensing that community, and then drawing your students into it. (Palmer, 1999 in Shapiro, Latham & Ross, 2006)

In Chapter II, I discussed my experience of working intimately with whole families and communities as an educator, social worker and service coordinator *with* families of infants, young children, and young children with special needs. As I connected deeply with these families, I learned about grief and loss, suffering and family solidarity as well as fragmentation, pride and sacrifice. Working in relationship with

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others—intimately loving, caring, struggling, laughing and crying—energized my whole body, mind and spirit. As we developed "the sense to live in common" (Wood, in Shapiro, Latham & Ross, 2006), we became more open to feeling each other's pain and suffering and were willing to take risks for the "greater good."

Upon returning to academia after decades of community work and political organizing, I have greatly appreciated the luxury of study and reflection. Although I've always preferred to work directly with my hands *with* others, the process of developing a deeper understanding of the world and the time to reflect and repair has enabled me to develop a renewed perspective of what I believe to be the most critical tasks for future generations.

I'm deeply grateful to my academic advisor, Dr. Svi Shapiro, and Dr. Kathleen Casey, who encouraged me to explore my own story as it relates to my concerns for a major shift in social and ecological relations. Many others emboldened me to explore the multiple layers of the human experience—the moral, philosophical and ethical dimensions of teaching and the importance of fusing our inward and outward lives. I studied along side numerous talented and courageous student colleagues whose work inspired and energized my own.

Yet, in academic life I also found fierce competition over ideology and ideas and a deadening certainty among many who do not leave open the possibility of learning from others or co-creating something that brought disparate voices and ideas together. I experienced community as an ideal not often practiced. A politeness existed that did not

always appear genuine. Rigid disciplinary and ideological boundaries often prevented the development of broad-based intersubjective and respectful learning communities.

Dogmatism

Shapiro (2006), also influenced by the work of Zygmunt Bauman, discusses the narrow thinking of "neo-tribal communities that are locked into their own sense of authoritarian truth and self-contained arrogance" (p. 88). He writes about the myriad of ways in which people are persuaded to form identities limited to one circle of influence. Living in ways that deny the complex web of life that shape our relations with the world are deeply destructive to the development of living-earth democracy.

As a "mature" student returning to school after experiencing decades of working-class solidarity and community kinship, the divisiveness and lack of collegiality in academia have been deeply discouraging. With time to reflect more deeply, I also realized how my own dogmatic focus on the ills of the world limited my willingness to listen to the voices of my students who lived a different experience.

I began to question my need to instill my own regime of truths into my students rather than be truly open to co-creating something alive with mutual care and concern. Rethinking with greater humility my own rigid belief systems enabled me to discover more comprehensive and holistic ways of helping my students to think *both* critically about the world while focusing resolutely on their own abilities to experience, imagine and create a world free of violence and destruction.

Moving to the South sparked a whole new way of understanding the world. I knew that quibbling over who was more oppressed and who was more accountable would

not create the beloved community I yearned for. Listening deeply to my students' feedback and witnessing my fellow student colleagues, I began to question my narrow emphasis on "social justice" without the accompanying need for mutual accountability and reciprocity, responsibility *for* each other and the earth that sustains all of life.

Bowers (2000, 2001, 2006), Martusewicz (2001, 2009), and Martusewicz and Edmundson (2004) have written extensively about the narrowness of social-justice perspectives with a concentration on individual rights rather than collective responsibility. Centering on human *freedom* while ignoring the interconnected web of life that sustains human communities prevents the reciprocity required by humans to respect and conserve all of life.

The illusion of being able to "win" one's rights, isolated from the needs of the whole system can become self-serving, narrow-minded and limiting. Its premise is based on tweaking but also maintaining existing structures of empire and power. Liberation pedagogy is so often fraught with its own form of indoctrination, power and control, with an emphasis on critically based material relations and linear forms of thinking. Bowers (2006) warns that many social-justice liberals seem incapable of considering their good intentions for helping others could be experienced by others as a form of colonization.

I believe the most urgent challenges ahead for educators and community leaders must include the ecological questions of long-term survival for all of life. What brings us together to create webs of solidarity, mutuality and trust that have the potential to call into question existing structures of power and influence? Struggling for workable alternatives is a practice of living democracy searching for common patterns and threads

that tie us together in unflinching solidarity as the grounding for mutual community projects, including justice. It requires an openness and humility to learn from each other and the natural world.

Martusewicz and Edmunston (2004) believe we live in a fragile yet interdependent world with all kinds of living creatures, human and non-human. "To be human is to live engaged in a vast, and complex system of life, and human well-being depends on learning how to protect it" (p. 71).

Eco-Justice

The "sense" to live in common with each other, nested within the complex ecology of the earth, requires a radical shift in consciousness. Creating communities of care and reciprocity within more open-ended democratic communities requires mutual accountability and the participation of all in community regeneration. With an over-emphasis on human forms of resistance, justice and reactivity that perpetuate difference, intellectual dissection, and deconstructionist and rationalist critique, we are preventing ourselves from *imagining, creating and living* what we profess to want.

> Huge centralized programs, global initiatives, and other top-down solutions will never suffice to restore and protect the health of the animate earth. *For it is only at that scale of our direct, sensory interactions with the land around us that we can appropriately notice and respond to the immediate needs of the living world.* (Abram, 1996, p. 268)

An eco-justice perspective deepens social-justice thinking by recognizing that human cultures are nested in larger life systems. Developing an intercultural and ecological consciousness requires a conscious recognition of the interdependence of local

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and global ecosystems as well as an eco-ethical commitment to protect and preserve the

commons shared by all. With a greater focus on preserving past traditions that root us in

intergenerational networks of care, we can honor everyone's story as we search for

collective meaning and the work required for mutual survival.

> We split paradoxes so reflexively that we do not understand the price we pay for our habit. The poles of a paradox are like the poles of a battery: hold them together, and they generate the energy of life; pull them apart, and the current stops flowing. When we separate any of the profound paired truths of our lives, both poles become lifeless specters of themselves—and we become lifeless as well. (Palmer, 1998, p. 65)

Reciprocity

Reciprocity is a foundational principle of ecological systems. It assures us that we

confront our own complicit participation in numbing forms of denial, neglect and harm.

As we more consistently understand the dire consequences of our actions and

unwillingness to hold ourselves accountable, we are better able to address the collective

problem of the whole living earth community. Those of us living in the West (especially)

have taken more than our share of the earth's natural resources, while others around the

globe suffer immeasurable harm a lack of adequate resources.

Living communities "rejuvenate ecological processes while reactivating people's

creativity, solidarity and interdependence" (Shiva 2005, p. 63). The give-and-take of

reciprocal relations essential to any living democracy are forged by an understanding of

our interdependent relations and the possibilities and limits of our eco-system. Shiva

argues that basic principles of living organisms and cultures include self-organization,

self-regulation and self-renewal. She refers to Indian leader Mahatma Gandhi, who

celebrated the principle of *Ahimsa,* or non-violence, which combines justice and sustainability on a deeper level.

To assure that enough resources are shared by all species, and left for future generations "not taking more than we need" is one of the highest principles of living democracy. As diversity makes give-and-take possible, mutuality enables the self-organization of systems and the interconnections between all living beings that sustain future generations. Without mutuality and reciprocity there is no mechanism for sustainability.

Teaching and Learning Relations

Breaking down the walls of distrust became a major focus of my work as I entered into the classroom as a graduate teaching assistant, teaching the foundations of education in a class called Institution of Education to future educators. The project of creating an opening for honest, interactive, intergenerational and intersubjective dialogue outside of shame and blame is a continual challenge. To create an open, respectful and democratic learning community, I realized through my own mishaps and arrogance that a shift was required in my ability to really hear and *take to heart* the voices of my students and the many subcultures they represented.

Most of my students were full of optimism and determination to be the change they wished for the world. Many of my students loved the Bible and were already engaged in various community projects. Others did not exhibit many of the qualities that I felt the Bible embraced. "Love thy neighbor as thyself" (Leviticus 19:18)—or a

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responsibility to those who have less and a concern for the natural world of God's creation—did not come to my mind for many who wanted to bring the Bible back into the classroom, my classroom and the public-school system overall.

During the first couple semesters of teaching this class, many of my students would plug their ears as I attempted to *rationally* explain *to* them how ideology is produced to create a passive citizenry. I wanted them to recognize the brutality of inequality and the power of hegemonic forms of domination that create consent to ideologies that are not life affirming. I had so much "truth" to tell.

Intersubjective relations require that people are the subjects of their own stories, not the object of someone considered a higher power. Each person has the authority to speak for her/himself with full voice and agency, outside of cultural interpretations and power. I learned from experience just how critical this framework was to my ability to reach my students with respect and mutuality.

Social Justice

Many of my students reported feeling discouraged by the emphasis on critical pedagogy and social justice. They wanted to focus more on alternative possibilities and on the nuts and bolts of what they *could* do to become more equipped to deal with future challenges. Below, one of my students articulated her concerns:

> I feel like I'm being hounded with negativity—as if all of us are to blame. But what about the people (like many of the students here) who are aware of these issues and want to change things for the better? I feel like these people are left out of the articles a lot of the time.

In the process of taking my students voices to heart, I learned to become more observant, *de-centered* and less deterministic in prioritizing my own narrative as an educator. Eventually, I learned to deeply respect the voices of my students in all their varied subcultures. It is to their persistence that I owe much gratitude as they taught me a great deal about humility, acceptance and mutual respect.

I realized it was far more critical that my students find each other, outside of "rightdoing and wrongdoing" (Rumi, reprinted in Barks, 1997) to develop the sense and skills needed to live in common. As I relaxed in my need to "bank" information *down to* my students, I realized how effortlessly they came together in joy and celebration outside of ideological battles and polarized "us-versus-them" discussions. I learned to build on the solidarity of their common experience and patterns that already existed in the classroom and encouraged open hearts and participatory minds eager to learn from one another.

I grew to understand the importance of creating spaces in our schools and communities that enable people to participate broadly in the democratic and decision-making process with an eye toward the welfare of the whole community. Realizing how differently this "sense" could be interpreted and recognizing my own narrow and insufficient formula was the beginning of a journey that taught me much about life, teaching and learning, leading, and facilitating community bonds**.**

In Chapter II, I discussed my past social-justice work as it developed over a period in time when mass marches were held every other weekend to end war, poverty and discrimination and to affirm the rights of all beings to live and work with respect and

dignity. I lived mass-movement politics for decades and joined with many others to "fight the good fight" to radically change what was deeply wrong with the world.

The emphasis on *fighting* for change in the name of dogmatic truths, however, did not usually allow for the preservation of existing relationships, care for each other or the development of sustainable communities of solidarity and resistance. Viewing the world as a battlefield with automatic assumptions about good and bad, right and wrong, and what we *must* do, ran counter to the development of communities capable of democratic decision-making and long-term sustainability.

Bowers (2001) argues that many social-justice liberals in academia are not grounded in the practices of everyday life with the humility of life experiences gained from living in communities. As self-designated vanguards, they substitute elitist and hierarchical notions of empowerment with individualistic assumptions of power and control. They skip over a true recognition of respect for local, genuine grassroots leadership and the critical importance of relational work and intergenerational wisdom. Maintaining anthropological assumptions of human superiority to the earth, they neglect the natural world.

Bowers (2006) warns that by perpetuating cultural assumptions about the power of an anthropocentric world controlled through linear, determinist thoughts and action, we delude ourselves into *justifying* harm and destruction of our natural world. Rationalist, scientific systems of categorization, sorting and controlling the thought process disregard intergenerational ways of knowing that are connected to the land and share a

deep respect or how to "live within the limits and possibility of local eco-systems" (Bowers, 2001, p. 31).

Bowers argues we must become more aware of the limits of science. Turning scientific inquiry into an ideology that has the effect of justifying whatever people feel they need to justify. Yet the self-designated vanguards do not hold themselves to the same scrutiny. In the process the possibility of developing mutual accountability, trust and respect is diminished.

Returning to the classroom as a student and teacher enabled me to observe through my students just how my own self-righteousness, and others of my generation, prevented me from hearing new voices infused with a different form of moral outrage and concern. Many of my generation were righteous in our need to change the world but were not open to diverse contexts and ways of understanding how to create the world we imagined. Our determined plan required that we teach our truth *to* others and attempt to recruit them to our ideas rather than practice reciprocal relations.

Martusewicz (2001) was influenced by the work of Michel Serres, who held there are no universal models that guide us toward understanding. There are only "diverse and multiple islands of possible thought and meaning in a noisy sea, whose connections must be searched for or invented, and may exist or may not" (p. 10). The assumptions created by those who cling to such models may delude them into their own superior truth, but in the long run I believe they cripple the possibility of creating collectivity and solidarity with others who hold divergent beliefs.

Reciprocal Relations

The give-and-take of reciprocal relationships requires humility and recognition that other truths can be valid and other realities worth exploring that may challenge our firmly held beliefs. Hyper-separating and prioritizing human needs over ecological needs has created the mess we are in now. With our ears closer to the ground we can develop the skills of open dialogue, active listening, mediation and negotiation that make possible the development of collective and mutually responsible communities of care to develop and flourish.

Rather than creating and responding to a hierarchy of oppression and accountability that focused on certainty, blame and continued separation, I wanted my classrooms to reflect the world I sought. Understanding how globalization, neo-liberalism, hyper-consumerism and forms of domination disable the practice of democracy must also be balanced with the development of eco-ethical care, self-reflection and mutual accountability.

Inclusive democratic practice that insists on self-critical, open-ended relationships, and the nourishment and deepening of the spirit of democracy, would be more than an ideal in my classroom. Exposing our students to what can be done and the efforts already underway bring abstract ideas into concrete practices. Many of my students were already engaged in faith-based projects both locally and globally. One of my students wrote about her increasing awareness of environmental issues and how they were taught in her schools. She points out the missing link needed to directly involve

others in the work to be done. Providing our students as well as local citizens with

concrete actions they can take to be a part of the solution is a missing link.

> I remember learning about the environment in school, watching scary videos about
> how one day kids would have to play outside in masks and there wouldn't be any
> trees left, and being told to recycle, but I don't remember ever being told what could
> be done to implement a real and effective change.

Recognizing that human intelligence is "part of a vast and complex system of

reciprocal relations" human and cultural forms of making sense of the world cannot be

separated from the natural environment (Martusewicz & Edmundson, 2004, p. 71). The

major shift required to prevent worldwide ecological devastation includes a critical

understanding of past destruction *and* a move away from human-centered ways of

knowing to the development of reciprocal human/earth relations.

Eco-Ethical Care

After reading an article by Martusewicz and Edmundson (2004), one of my

students summed up his greatest hope:

> The authors point out that although individual work has its importance it cannot
> compare to the importance of social togetherness when a task needs to be
> accomplished. This means that we cannot see ourselves from the outside of society
> but actually IN society…Educators must teach that we are a part of whole, not a part
> that stands on the rest of the whole. We must also teach and be able to get kids to
> understand that our actions have implications for the planet, good and bad.

The sense to live in common is about using all our senses to reanimate our ability

to cut through the clutter and noise of hyper-consumerism and separation to create

joyous, reciprocal human/earth relations. There is great urgency for the work of educators

and community leaders to focus anew on what are our *just obligations* to each other and the earth we call our home.

Shifting our emphasis away from separation, division and categorical imperatives that prevent our insertion into a world gone mad with violence, desire and disconnection is critical. Developing mutually responsible ways to live in common and promoting reciprocity between human and non-human communities and decision-making that leads to long-term survival of life requires trust, humility, love and imagination.

Grumet (in Holdstein & Bleich, 2001) wrote about the reciprocity of the teaching/learning experience, as well as the reciprocity between public and private life. She argues that feminists have been more concerned with providing collective continuity between different spheres of life. Grumet views educational narratives of experience within the classroom as a form of collective continuity and "linguistic bridge" from the private ways of understanding experience to collective ways of knowing that we call public. (Grumet, in Holdstein & Bleich, 2001, p.169).

The editors of *Fields of green: restorying culture, environment and education* (McKenzie, Hart, Bai, & Jickling, 2009) view education as a cultural and environmental phenomenon that encourages critique and "creative re-imagining of culturally embedded habits of consciousness" (p. 346). While re-imagining outside of fixed dogma and rationalist critique is essential, the practices and skills required to live in common for future survival become ever more urgent to consider.

Rather than concentrating on the nature of schooling, my focus has been on teaching/learning relations—the intersubjective relationship between teachers and/among

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learners that has the potential to generate a creative and compassionate life-affirming culture. The struggle in education is to create spaces for "common conversations about what is possible in this time and place for all within the community" (Grumet, 2001, p. 176) of life.

The Significance of Place

In Chapter II, I discussed the importance of developing an understanding of our own rootedness, of where and how one's consciousness originates and by what means are we nurtured to think beyond our own narrow confines. The process of understanding who we are and our complex cultural inheritance is a way to understand our historic task *in our bones* as well as what patterns we share collectively with others.

Kincheloe and Pinar (1991) discuss the nature of significance of place, and of the history that lives within us, as a way of bringing the particular into an understanding of embedded social forces. Without a grounded view of the world in which education takes place, our experience becomes fragmented bits of trivial knowledge and the political effects of our process are obscured (p. 5).

The authors believe that a "synergism occurs when the rhythms of time and fleeting glimpses of the unconscious are integrated with a knowledge of place to reveal hidden designs" (p. 8). A historical dimension of place enables humans to understand the interconnected meanings and particularities of the social landscape and the people who inhabit them.

Teaching in the South

My awareness of the significance of place was greatly enhanced by my teaching experience as a teaching assistant at UNCG. The majority of my students originated from the rural South and many from Christian fundamentalist backgrounds. Having lived in a more interculturally diverse, less polarized community in Northern California for the last 28 years, my lack of understanding of rural culture and of the complex history of the South became a huge obstacle to my ability to hear the voices of my students and engage them in exploring various ways of understanding the world.

I became familiar with the work of Paolo Freire more than 30 years ago while writing my master's thesis about education and childcare in Cuba. Freire's (2001) pedagogical method of reflection and action to change the world—as well as his emphasis on maintaining a critical consciousness of the world to most effectively struggle to change it—made sense to me at the time. He (2001) defined the role of the educator as one who facilitates the investigation of "generative themes," the complexity of ideas, concepts, hopes, fears and challenges. He spoke of developing a sense of power and hope to transform the world through critical consciousness and an awareness of the contradictions of relations of power.

Freire (2000) professed that teaching wasn't about technique but about a way of becoming. The process presupposes an openness that allows for the revision of one's own consciousness. If the role of the teacher is to enable students to navigate through dominant discourses as they intersect their lived experience, then my job must also be

one of understanding and appreciating the discourses or stories by which the majority of

my students lived, and the an interrogation of my own assumptions.

I understood from Friere that teachers must respect the critical consciousness of

their learners and experiential knowledge base as the starting point for any critical

elaboration. Freire (1994, 2000, 2001), and many other *progressive* educators such as

John Dewey and others, emphasized that teaching must emerge from the experience of

the learner. But what was the experience of my students? How did the story of the South

inform their own frameworks of meaning, identities and ways of understanding the

world?

Racism

As a young child**,** I became aware of the deep wounds the system of slavery had

inflicted on the souls of black and white Americans, especially in the South**,** after

spending three of my early years living in Pensacola, Florida, where my dad was

stationed as a flight trainer during the Korean War. My parents had already witnessed the

double standards of racism in the military during World War II and were determined to

educate their children about the horrors of the Ku Klux Klan and the outrage of bigotry

and racism.

Learning about the horrors of racism as a child is far different from understanding

the complex historical legacy left from more than a century of systemic racism,

segregation, humiliation and economic discrimination. Having moved to the South as an

adult, I have become deeply saddened by a newfound understanding of the vestiges of the

system of slavery and the resulting polarization of white and black Americans, which I've

concluded from experience is more profoundly *lived* in the South. I continue to feel a sense of alienation and bewilderment about Southern culture, which I experience as generous and deeply traditional but also fraught with distrust, anger, and brutality.

In the process of expanding my own lens, while learning to live in and understand Southern patriarchal culture, I continue to struggle to understand why so many academicians and social-justice "leaders" in the South seem to isolate "whiteness" as the center of any discussion of power, pedagogy and social change. Conflating race and power without an appreciation of the complexity of the interrelated issues of class, gender, historical context, location, one's position, and other overlapping forms of social identity, power and domination seemed shortsighted and fundamentally flawed. As my understanding evolved over the years of doctoral study, I recognized the pure arrogance of excluding the physical environment as part of our consideration, responsibility and care.

The resulting polarization caused by dualistic and binary thinking is exploited by the media to sell papers, politicians to win elections, groups that benefit from promoting themselves as champions of the people, and by others as a way to excuse their own accountability for damages done. With a focus on the past, using blame, guilt, anger and shame, people are able to excuse themselves from full participation in struggling *for* sustainable, long-term solutions to protect and conserve all of life.

One of my students expressed her frustration with blaming others and not confronting our own complicity in perpetuating division by the following reflection:

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I wish that we could all grasp this concept—that we are all HUMAN BEINGS, all with different backgrounds, cultures, skin colors, and families—but we all have hearts and they all matter. So why not stop breaking each other's hearts and start trying to reconcile with one another? We all need each other and it's time to start acting like we have some idea of what love, peace, and EQUALITY really *should* look like.

The distrust of new people with fresh ideas who do not fit neatly into essentialist categories creates a "with us or against us" mentality that seems embedded in the hearts and minds of too many people I've worked along side of within the local and academic community. There doesn't seem to be sufficient attention paid to the intertextual or multiple dimensions of power and privilege, mutual accountability, and the need for reciprocity and solidarity with others of different backgrounds. This sense of distrust seems decidedly Southern.

Context

Good teachers are aware of context. As an educator in an unfamiliar culture, I learned to listen more intently and become more humble in understanding how much I did not "know" about the culture in which I was learning to live and teach. I realized, after much stumbling, that my own context and history of place was radically different— but not superior from—that of the majority of my students.

The experience of being from an *other* culture forced me to confront my own exclusive cultural framework of meaning that was not as open as I thought to new ways of knowing and understanding the world. This realization required a great deal of humility and immersion into new cultural ways of knowing that forced me to listen more

deeply to appreciate the cultural voices and stories of my students. This was the *starting point* in developing a respectful and democratic learning community.

Kincheloe and Pinar (1991) describe the South as a place tortured by a past of evil and brutality. Most white Southerners, according to the authors, are possessed by guilt and painful struggles for atonement. Many white Southerners are driven to extreme denial of the past because of an inheritance of responsibility for past hurts. The authors believe that the peculiar tradition of Southern relationships of resentment and denial has led to political conservatism and a rejection of idealistic or utopian visions based on "theoretical generalization ungrounded by an understanding of the ambiguities of their concrete social lives" (Kincheloe & Pinar, 1991, p. 11).

The invasion of land and communities through the expansion of industrialization into the South has contributed to the development of more technocratic forms of education in Southern schools. As a result the authors believe a Southern sense of place includes an appreciation of and attachment to extended family and local communities and a distrust of Northerners and "outsiders."

> … as it sensitizes one to those elements that make a community unique; its natural setting with those places, for example, where one likes to be when the sun sets, the webs of friendship, and those kinship ties that would be impossible to reproduce elsewhere. (Kincheloe & Pinar, 1991, p. 12)

This type of localism or what some would discern as "provincialism" has created defensive distinctive communities against the invasion of outsiders. Seared into Southern historical consciousness is the memory of the brutality and genocide of slavery, displacement, and the Southern ghosts of a bygone era.

The authors found a litany of "thou shalt nots" as well as a concern for individual behavior, carefully monitored by others. Southern fundamentalism emphasized action and feelings over thought and theoretical analysis (Kincheloe & Pinar, 1991, p.13). Faith in God the Father—as well as other masculine representations of certainty—protection from above, loyalty and control appear to dominate most social relations.

In an attempt to understand how a sense of place shapes our lives and provides a sense of rootedness, I believe it is also critical to investigate ways in which cultural myths are created and perpetuated to maintain conformity and consent to domination. A more conscious investigation and unpacking of how people develop their own unique cultural ways of knowing and understanding the world would allow for the suspension of judgment. Searching for the traces and patterns of our commonalities provides an opening for greater collective consciousness and the possibility of solidarity and mutual communal trust.

Place-Based Consciousness

In response to my students' and my own bewilderment, I added articles to the syllabus that address the history of place and the significance of appreciating the roots of everyone's story. One of my students described the connection he made to "community regeneration" and civic responsibility:

> Place-based education is designed to really get students to connect to their community. This can be accomplished not only with real world problem-solving and nature studies, but also through cultural studies, micro-enterprises and community regeneration. This will equip students with the knowledge they need to move forward as they advance in their education and to successfully become more active members of their community. Students can learn not only within the four walls of the

classroom, but in the real world and that excites them to find out they don't have to wait to be a part of that world. They already are.

Place-based consciousness points to the necessity of learning from our ancestors and appreciating our own particular historical network of relationships. Understanding the unique historical contexts of others facilitates the collective wisdom of humanity toward conservation and survival. To include eco-ethical care, this process forges forgiveness and reciprocity toward others who are different but share similar ancestral traditions and ecological context. Those historical and ecological relations that best contribute to the well being of the community are the ones that have not been commodified for individual and commercial gain.

Gruenewald and Smith (2008) advocate for a "place-conscious" education that connects to the life of the wider community both locally and globally. Reconnecting grounded concrete experience includes the historical memory of place and past traditions that held communities together. They advocate for an education that leads to recognition of the *assets* found in human and natural environments closest to home, including cultural practices that emphasize caring for community, mutuality and reciprocity. Education in and of place makes students more aware of the interdependence of their own welfare and security with the health and welfare of the whole community.

> This knowledge of interdependence must have emerged over time through painful experiences for our predecessors and remains embedded in the language and culture of Native peoples on all continents. Knowledge of interdependence, now emerging in societies across the globe, must come to inform all human decisions if people currently alive hope to pass down to their offspring places worthy of inhabitation. (Gruenewald & Smith, 2008, p. xxi)

Martusewicz and Edmundson (2004) talk of developing an eco-ethical consciousness that includes a greater appreciation of our interrelationship with nature as "part of a vast and complex system of reciprocal relations" where the process of making sense cannot be separated from body and place (p. 73). In this perspective, life is seen as a balance of the well being of all—all our relations within the web of life.

Giving Thought Wings

> A genuinely ecological approach does not work to attain a mentally envisioned future, but strives to enter, ever more deeply, into the sensorial present. It strives to become ever more awake to the other lives, the other forms of sentience and sensibility that surround us in the open field of the present moment. (Abram, 1996, p. 272)

Our ability to imagine creative alternatives that connect the inner and outer dimensions of the self with the social, cultural, moral and ethical, economic, political and environmental contexts are critical. Creating a vision that transcends traditional disciplinary boundaries requires an expanded consciousness that includes how our actions affect others and the development of a participatory consciousness and collective solidarity. What separates us and pulls us apart is critical to understand and appreciate. What brings us together in communion and solidarity creates our ability to act collectively and preemptively in a world gone mad with death and destruction.

Many in academia and the political sphere disregard the layers of understanding that we adopt to maintain supremacy over others and the physical and spiritual world that nurtures and sustains all of life. Expanding consciousness to include the global world, our

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relationship to the global South, and the physical and spiritual world is described by Castoriadis as "giving thought wings" (Kenway & Fahey, 2009, p. 21).

By linking the local to the global, the private to the public—while including the richness of the natural world that surrounds us—we are forced to stretch our thinking beyond the human world to inspire global ethical and ecological imaginations. Moving away from determinist dogma toward a more open and imaginative possibility for a major shift in consciousness will require different forms of pedagogy that can deeply connect with the heart and soul at deeper levels of experience and understanding. It takes great humility for many to recognize their own complicity in reductionist and anthropencentric ways of knowing that leave off the physical world in considerations of harm and neglect.

Imagine All the People

David Purpel has written extensively about the importance of imagining a life of individual and communal meaning. He argued that "educational" issues are not separate from their social, political and cultural context. The rise of consumerist, market-based relations that sever our moral, spiritual and communal connections lead to fragmented, discontinuous and instrumental relationships, preventing the enduring webs of meaning that Shapiro discusses in *Losing Heart* (2006).

Purpel (1998), who wrote about the moral and spiritual dimensions of education, questions the notion that we significantly affect social and cultural transformation largely through serious study and dialogue.It is more than a little disquieting when we consider the poignant effects of critical rationality on our struggle to find meaning and create a morally sound and spiritually satisfying path to … social justice. This process has inevitably confronted us with enormously diverse perspectives, incredibly perplexing dilemmas, extraordinarily complex ideas, and a fathomless set of paradoxes. (p. 253)

Purpel advocated greater caution against gross generalizations, which are suspicious of certainty, especially our own and more reverential toward multiple ways of knowing and understanding different systems of belief. Although we may become more aware of the historical, theoretical, cultural and political, "in our smartness and skeptical detachment we become seduced by our own self-serving rhetoric masked as universal truths" (Purpel, 1998, p. 253).

Separation, Reductionism, and Polarization

My students have informed me that in most of their classes, they sit in rows with their backs to each other— the professor lecture, often accompanied by a prepackaged PowerPoint presentation. The lights are dimmed and there is reportedly very little interaction. The students are then encouraged to "communicate" online using Blackboard, a web-based program that enables students and teachers to participate in courses online. The Institution of Education class is one of the few times they get to think. As one of my students expressed it:

We get bogged down by all our classes, paper, grades, work, money (or lack thereof). Many times information we have learned is just memorized to achieve that good grade or finish a paper. However, there are those classes in which the information you learn provokes deeper thought and self-realization. Throughout this class, the Institution of Education, people have complained about not feeling like they have learned any real "knowledge" they can take with them into the classroom, but I think leaving us with questions is helping us come to our own realizations and becoming prepared to answer them when we start to teach.

Without a dialogical approach to education that includes face-to-face interaction, it's understandable why so many students seem alienated and bored with schooling. Real knowledge becomes the rigid facts and formulas for them to "use" to get ahead in life. Classrooms that discourage engagement and interaction contribute to detachment toward those who are suffering. In our silence, we become bystanders, complicit in maintaining systems of domination and violence.

Purpel (1998) argued that in our attempts to separate distinct phenomena from a larger framework of meaning and labeling them to be educational, we blur the intimate relationship between critical, cultural, political and social phenomena *and* education. Martusewicz (2001) views Platonic ideas that underlie so many attempts to impose determinist truths as deeply destructive. She refers to the work of Deluze (1994), who critiqued frameworks of thought that attempt to represent an orderly and hierarchical world.

Pulling apart established, taken-for-granted ways of thinking that categorize life forms and therefore present them in static groupings or orderly cycles, he urges movement toward a greater sense of awe and wonder, the intensity and chaos generated by forces of differentiation … (Martusewicz, 2001, p.128).

My first class as a teaching assistant at UNCG was taught in the fall of 2004 in the middle of a very polarized and angry election. In retrospect, I realized my past experience and belief system was based on convincing others of the errors in their thinking, which led to viewing "student resistance" as one of ignorance or fear instead of respecting the multiple truths and worlds that my students lived.

Many of my students were fervently agitated by what they considered "activist liberal professors." That semester, we became mired in a dualistic battle that polarized the class and limited our capacity to hear multiple truths or find a common language. It was a battle of differing truths, dogmatic and polarized stories of the North and South, old and young, Christian and non-Christian, Republican and Democrat, liberal and conservative, saint and sinner.

I knew what I wanted my students to know, but I did not know how to connect my ideas *with* their many varied ways of making meaning. This disconnect forced me to reconsider my own dogmatic, social-justice perspective of teaching and learning, which was not truly open to *hearing* (with respect) the voices of my students. Their "resistance" obliged me reconsider the importance of humility and of my own need for certainty and control of the story.

Experiencing my own reactivity to what I perceived as my students reactivity made me take a step back to reflect on my reliance on reductionist linear forms of knowing and teaching. I found myself actually wanting to hammer my truth into them to prove their ideas were wrong. I realized there had to be more reunifying methods of

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teaching and learning that encouraged respect and responsibility, reciprocity and care, and less binary ways of teaching and learning together.

Humbled by this first experience of teaching in the South, I was forced to step back and rethink my teaching philosophy. To develop a more truly *open* and intersubjective stance toward my students required me to investigate the "stories" of rural Southerners. Was my job to push my students to "own up" to their racist attitudes by forcing them to understand a history they experienced differently? Was it to shock them into the shame and confusion of their complicity in a system I *assumed* they did not understand? By "banking" (Freire, 2001) as much information as I could cram into them to *persuade* a different perspective, I got more push back than anything else.

Attempting to rationally recruit others to our ideals is deadening to the souls of all who hold divergent truths. I believe it is essential for educators and community leaders to examine the ways in which we perpetuate division and disintegration**,** encourage disconnection and harm, and discourage imagination and hope. By understanding our own complicity in creating a world of competition, consumption, and egoism, we will be far more able to inspire others to join in struggling for a better world.

Martusewicz (2001) believes that the dualized self arrogantly assumes to be the center-master of the universe, independent and self-sufficient. "Sustained by such divine omnipotence, this self-centered individual is free to exploit" whatever s/he feels is necessary to maintain their place in the hierarchy of power (p. 123).

Dualistic discourses that focus on separation and categorical thinking place ideas and people into rigid boxes that become so firmly entrenched that the possibility of

imagining anything other than one's own truth becomes impossible. This process is

disempowering to young people who have the energy and enthusiasm to imagine and

create something unimaginable, but are too often discouraged by the certainty and

pessimism of adults who have a clear agenda and rigid truths that preclude their

involvement as equals.

Respect and Mutuality

Plumwood (2006) believes that certain "knowledges involve monological

relationships as they imply the closure of the knower to the known" (p. 42). The knower

is viewed as the one who can change the other to make it conform to the desired effect.

The all-powerful all-knower cannot be changed themselves. By withholding the

possibility of respect and mutuality, recognition and engagement—an ethically

exclusionary or amoral knowledge stance toward the world creates the mechanism for

instrumentalism toward the object of study.

> In the absence of care and respect…and of responsibility to those who will be
> affected by it, it is inevitable that the knowledge relation is constructed as one in
> which the known is merely a means to the knower's end or to the ends of power
> which they, in the absence of respect and care, will come to serve. (p. 43)

After many mishaps, I began to explore more truly collaborative, intersubjective,

open-ended approaches that de-centered the teacher's narrative and role as the expert and

disseminator of information. I struggled to create more open spaces for students to

explore their own meaning and historical context. The students were the subjects of

their own storied lives, not blind objects of the teacher's concerns. I learned to become

more open, self-reflective, less reactive and to find ways for the students to find each other outside of the polarized stories that kept us all at war with each other over differing ideologies.

This process itself, I believe, is counter-hegemonic. Facilitating fully engaged democratic relations between teachers and students, between knowers, and among learners occur outside of hierarchical considerations of status, power and privilege. Knowledge is a social activity, not the passive "neutral reception of raw, 'pure' observational data by pre-social individuals" (Plumwood, p. 43). Understanding that there are multiple ways of knowing rather than an objective set of facts that exist outside of social relations is essential to the development of a critical understanding of the relationship between knowledge and power.

The time taken to establish solidarity and respect, inclusiveness and openness to differing ways of knowing lays the groundwork for future collective democratic projects. It is critical to challenge our students to understand the global issues surrounding schools and the larger world. I believe there must first be a foundation of trust and mutual respect capable of creating a sense of mutuality and care before these critical conversations take place. Wary of being indoctrinated and becoming a teacher who indoctrinates her students, this student struggled with some sort of balance between what we aim for students to learn and the context of their own belief systems:

How can we encourage students to move beyond tolerance? In class we talked about parts of our spirituality that do not include dogma, but I think some people view the dogma of their religion as the most important aspect of their spirituality. If one dogma is right then others must be wrong, so if a student in my class feels very strongly about their religion they may tolerate other religions, but refuse to go further. As a teacher I would like to find a way to guide and encourage my students toward less divisive ways of thinking without making them feel as if I want to change their beliefs.

Palmer (1998) believed that good teaching is about the integrity of the teacher and the trusting community s/he is able facilitate. Good teaching honors our connections— weaving together the complex stories and ideas of our students—creating a fabric that joins us together in collaborative thought and action.

The courage to teach is the courage to keep one's heart open in those very moments when the heart is asked to hold more than it is able so that teacher and students and subject can be woven into the fabric of community that learning, and living require. (Palmer, 1998, p.11).

After reading an article by Parker Palmer titled "The Grace of Great Things: Reclaiming the Sacred in Knowing, Teaching and Learning," (1999, in Shapiro, Latham, & Ross, 2006), one of my students wrote that it reminded him of one of his favorite movies titled "Lean on Me." The school principal, in the movie, takes over "the worst school possible," overcome with poverty, drugs, teen pregnancy, latch-key children, and other related issues of poverty and neglect.

In the article there is a quote that I love that reads "We can no longer afford a system of education that refuses to get engaged with the mess. We must be willing to join life where people live it –and they live it, we live it, at this convoluted intersection of the sacred and the secular." In my vision of teaching and as a future administrator, we have to become a part of the community not just a part of the school.

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Good teaching is not about lecturing others about the horrors of the world and *demanding* a change in what we have determined is necessary. It's more about inspiring people to *work together* to create mutually enhancing ways of living and working together than honor past histories and respect all of life. Good teaching is about finding the intersections between multiple ways of understanding the world, and creating a trusting, learning community where new ideas and possibilities can be explored *and* put into practice. It's about telling our stories and taking them to heart.

> If we stopped lobbing pedagogical points at each other and spoke about who we are as teachers, a remarkable thing might happen: identity and integrity might grow within us and among us, instead of hardening as they do when we defend our fixed positions from the foxholes of the pedagogy wars (Palmer, 1998, pp. 12–13).

Palmer believes that integrity is about claiming our inner voice of conscience as well as our fears about being onstage as mentors and leaders. What we "teach" must connect "with the living core of our students lives" toward our students' inward teacher. Remaining open and humble as educators is essential to invite others to engage in new ways of knowing the world that are inclusive of their thinking as well.

Listening to my own inner teacher, as recorded in this chapter is about developing the authority to teach with an ethic or responsibility and care, and the capacity to maintain an inner core of loving and acceptance of diversity as a generative force. Holding together disparate truths and maintaining my own sense of integrity while engaging in difficult conversations is a practice of love. Our students' inner teacher is filled with hope and anticipation in their ability to impact the world. They feel

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empowered by their newfound knowledge and eager to get to work to "submerge in the task" (Piercy, 1989, p. 106) they have chosen to do.

Imagining Otherwise

Many of my students react to the emphasis in the Institution of Education class on critical pedagogy and dogmatic analysis of what went wrong with the world with an accompanying critique that does not leave open to hearing their differing ways of knowing. Without a genuine openness to multiple and competing ways of knowing nor an accompanying vision that allows space for them to imagine their dreams, students feel overwhelmed by the grave challenges ahead. One of my students spoke with passion about the love of learning:

> Can you imagine what our lives would be like if everyone starting helping more than hindering, giving more than receiving, loving more than killing, building more than destroying!? The world would be a different place. The classroom would be a different place. If we allowed our students to come in the classroom and let the love of learning stay—let their souls be revealed and not shoved under books and test scores—if we actually let our students feel things in our classrooms—how different it all would be.

Students do not need to have their dreams beaten out of them by an exclusive focus on the horrors of the past. Many students exhibit and discuss the discouragement they feel over the emphasis that our society places on the ills of the world, with article after article of what *must* be done to correct past wrongs, and how they must change the world through their own magical powers to teach. How can they ever imagine what *can* be done with confidence in their own abilities when they are learning in a crippling atmosphere? One student voiced her concern in a reflection:

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To many people, my dreams might sound like "romanticism" as the article mentioned, but to me they are real and concrete and must come true. Often times I feel discouraged by the older generation (not all) when I express my dreams to them. They make me feel naïve, as if sooner or later reality will smack me in the face, as if did for them, and I will not be able to carry out my dreams…One of my main goals in life is to achieve my dreams no matter what challenges life throws at me.

Unrelenting social critique is voiced by other students as deeply discouraging as they enter into the work force for the first time and made aware of the seemingly impossibility of impacting their students lives. By prioritizing the teacher's voice and her/his framework of meaning, the students become passive bystanders, listening, recording and ready to regurgitate if necessary for a grade. In an intersubjective relationship, the context and concerns of the students as subjects of their own stories and experience are integral to the process.

This is not to say that social and political critique is not necessary. The majority of my students appear to experience the necessary outrage over the horrors of race and poverty and other forms of injustice. Feeling the outrage however is not enough. If not accompanied by the inspiration of experiencing what can be done and the connections to local and global organizations engaged in collaborative and collective activity to change existing circumstances—they will become deeply discouraged.

The more attention paid to the voices of my students, I heard their earnestness, love of learning and hope for the world being squelched by well-meaning educators who had not yet learned the lessons of humility and openness to their questions. The more open I became, the more able I was to find beauty, justice and truth reflected in the lives of all my students regardless of ideology, religious beliefs and political persuasion.

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Great lions can find peace in a cage.
    But we should only do that
        as a last
         .resort

So those bars I see that restrain your wings,
      I guess you won't mind I
        if I pry them
          open
    (Rumi in Ladinsky, 2002, p. 87)

The invisible solidarity that Mary Catherine Bateson (2004) calls the "unity of the living" exists between people of the world and the biosphere. Unleashed through conscious encouragement and practice, such solidarity can become the generative force for the good that can build greater, enduring webs of community. The connections made between "diverse and multiple islands of possible thought and meaning in a noisy sea," must be searched for and re-created collectively (Martusewicz, 2001, p. 10).

Hocking, Haskell, & Linds (2001) write about a more dynamic and fluid view of pedagogy as our whole bodies become engaged in an interconnected, sensory interplay between the diverse worlds we inhabit. As we leave behind structured and determined ways of viewing the world to more open path … action and knowing become one …

> … whether visible or invisible, evident or unsaid under water or above ground. Our unfolding path is laid in walking as action and knowing become one. We begin to leave behind structured ways of viewing the world, our ordered texts, as we explore "out in the open." (p. 3)

To enliven the imagination and encourage direct, participatory engagement over time I've developed a repertoire of embodied ways of teaching and learning that de-

center the teacher's narrative to create spaces for students to learn from each other while becoming more critically conscious of their own intergenerational history and culture. In the next section I discuss a process of intercultural storytelling developed by Greg Tenaka (2003) as one of many intersubjective, place-based, experiential approaches to teaching and learning that supports collective communities of care and reciprocity.

Intercultural and Intergenerational Storytelling

To acknowledge our ancestors means
we are aware that we did not make
ourselves, that the line stretches
all the way back, perhaps, to God; or
to Gods. We remember them because it
is an easy thing to forget: that we
are not the first to suffer, rebel,
fight, love and die. The grace with
which we embrace life, in spite of
the pain, the sorrows, is always a
measure of what has gone before.
(Alice Walker, 1973, p. 1)

The role of the educator is to help students navigate through dominant discourses as they intersect with lived experience and struggle over the co-construction of new meanings and possibility that make sense to them. Welch (1999) asks how we shape our lives when realizing that the structures of agency, ways of knowing and imagination are shaped by complex and contradictory forms of discourse?

Social discourses intersect with each other and are not mutually exclusive. Traditional ethnography encourages the reduction of cultural life to a static system of categorical relationships that leave out many critical factors in intercultural exchanges.

Bakhtin (Clark & Holquist, 1984) celebrated the plurality of experience and the world's unpredictability and believed in the multiplicity of languages and social discourse and the diversity and changeability of language and meaning—that is never rigid or static.

As advertising and media conglomerates increasingly become our culture's storytellers, preserving a sense of rootedness and socio-historical memory acts to counter the commodified culture and mythical imagining of an unreal world. The ability to see each other's history, the common patterns of survival and celebration of different cultures— is one way to break through the clutter and noise of market-based relations to find solidarity and mutual acceptance, forgiveness and reciprocity.

Could it be that by understanding the depth and complexity of our own stories and the stories of others, we would be better able to appreciate how we are different yet the same, appreciating the patterns and similarities as well as the difference and uniqueness? Zandy (1995) spoke of uncovering a larger consciousness out of mutuality and kinship welded from common work.

Understanding each other's history is the first step in reconstructing a mutually supportive and enlivened vision of interconnected webs of community and care. Helping my students explore their own unique, specific heritage and history of place, as well as developing the skills needed to listen to the stories of others, facilitates a meshing of kinship patterns, generative themes and webs of meaning that respect both differentiation and bonding. I, too, told my story and listened and learned about cultures other than my own.

Justice, love, compassion, respect have the ability to come alive in the lives of children in our classrooms—instead of the things that fester and destroy such as violence, isolation, humiliation, and powerlessness. One of the things that Bigelow said that I found to be VERY important was that our classrooms must be "grounded in the lives of our students." Our students have lives that are filled with hope and despair, love and hate, joy and sadness. Our students' lives matter! And we must show them that very fact by allowing them to walk into the classroom with their lives instead of making them put their lives at the doorway of the classroom-separating school life from home life.

The words above, from one of my most compassionate students, is a reflection from an article by Bill Bigelow (1994) soon after the Virginia Tech massacre. That semester, we talked deeply about love and forgiveness, fear and alienation, isolation and the degradation of others. We struggled over meaning and language, and developed the skills needed to hear each other's stories, listen to each other's pain and suffering, and became more humble as we struggled to make sense of the shootings and our own fears.

One of my students "came out" to the class that semester and was outraged by another student's judgment. Somehow the intensity of the Virginia Tech crisis enabled the whole class to go deeper, and the amount of trust and caring developed over the semester was truly inspiring to me. We listened to each other's stories and participated in open and sometimes difficult conversations about race, class, gender, sexual orientation and other forms of "othering." We developed an appreciation of how we fit into a larger system and biosphere. By struggling for connection with others from different life experiences, we were able to let go of deadening dogmas and limiting frameworks of meaning that prevented the possibility of solidarity and respect.

Stories, like rhymed poems or songs, readily incorporate themselves into our felt experience; the shifts of action echo and resonate our own encounters—in hearing or telling the story we vicariously live it, and the travails of its characters embed themselves into our own flesh. (Abram, 1996, p. 120)

Gregg Tenaka, (2003) in his book *The intercultural campus*: *Transcending culture & power in American higher education*, talks of creating more reunifying approaches to human development and conflict by moving away from polarized thinking to more intersubjective and intercultural ways of understanding our relationships to one another. Also critical is an understanding of the complex ways we possess power over each other.

Moving from binary "us versus them" ways of thinking, which create cultural polarization, to consider similar patterns of love, loss, family and discrimination allowed for greater respect and a more level playing field for the more difficult discussions ahead. Intersubjective ways of thinking and interacting require an understanding and acceptance that each person is the main subject and storyteller of their own story.

The experience of non-duality inspired by intersubjective storytelling creates an awareness of the profound interconnectedness of life and the developing sense of non-violent relationships. The "richest possible unfolding of the person, not in an isolated, atomized way, but in relationship to the rest of the natural world" and community lays a foundation for the creation of collaborative intelligence and collective action (Spretnak, 2004, p. 45).

Outside of prevailing, mainstream ideas and stories we are told about our culture through media and advertising, we can better understand the many different

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"subjectivities" that we inherit from our home culture and family heritage. We begin to understand the fluidity of meaning as we learn of the hardships and texture of our own family stories that enable us to recognize and accept similar patterns in one another's stories.

An exploration of one's own family history also exposes the many ways we are different from the homogenous stories of an assumed white middle-class culture that defines "otherness" as non-white and poor. One of my students expressed her recognition of both positive and negative elements of her own family heritage, and her observation that many of her student colleagues have adopted the safety of homogeneity.

> I believe this denial of any distinct heritage, to remain "plain vanilla," allows them to distance themselves from groups that do claim a heritage. By their refusal or inability to claim a culture, to deny the possibility of their own "otherness," they feel impervious to the label of "other," and in that denial they permit themselves to hate whatever or whoever is different and unknown.

Sharing Each Other's History

Throughout the semester in this class, we shared our stories in small group discussions around the following questions adapted from *The Intercultural Campus* (Tenaka, 2003).

1. Tell your group a brief history of your family's entry into and movement across the United States. What is your ethnic background? In what regions of the country did you and/or your family live and how did this affect your identity? Bring pictures of your family as far back as you can go.

2. Historically, what type of work did your family members do? How has your family's class identity change over the years? When did you first notice economic differences? How did you feel about it?

3. Can you describe a situation when you felt discriminated against by others? Describe a time when you felt privileged in relation to others.

4. Describe a place where inequality or exclusion occurred in your life. Dream of a place where inequality and lack of respect no longer exists. What are the ingredients that would prevent this from happening in the future. What can you do differently?

5. Given what you have learned in this class, what would you do differently as a teacher to make your classroom more intercultural, ethically and ecologically responsive, and respectful of all of life?

6. What are your fondest memories of being with nature and the land?

Moving away from a dominant/minority, either/or, and binary ways of interrelating we are far more able to see each other as part of a mutual process of exchange outside of win/lose, competitive relationships. Rather than turn others into objects of our own stories, intersubjectivity encourages a reciprocal and non-hierarchal approach to human understanding.

When multiple cultures interact, allowing for unity and difference to coexist, we are far more capable of finding the solidarity and trust necessary to confront the larger social, economic and environmental questions that demand our urgent attention and participation. Recognizing the pain and suffering endured within our own family heritage—the struggle and persistence against forms of discrimination, poverty and hardship—breaks through the comforting myths of belonging to a homogenous culture of goodness and authority.

Listening to the stories and voices of my students and their most earnest desire for a loving world of peace and reconciliation gave me such hope that I truly realized the significance of *reciprocal,* pedagogical relationships. By creating open-ended, inclusive

and pluralistic communities that value self-reflection and shared understanding, we are best able to "imagine things otherwise," as Doug Risner (2006) pointed out in his article about Matthew Sheppard. Below is a reflection from a student who wrote about the horrors of hatred, murder, child abuse, rape, gangs, war, poverty and homelessness:

> The fact is, this is a world full of people struggling—struggling to fit in, to be loved, to be treated fairly, to be equal to others—not to be the "OTHERS" that everyone talks about. It seems as if the impulse to do good is being pushed to the side and the impulse to hate, divide, and blame is taking over. Like Doug Risner says, "It is within this profound confusion that we must begin to imagine things otherwise, radically different."

Ensemble of Relations

M.C. Bateson (2004) believes the best hope for our species lies in the ability to learn new patterns of attention to each other and the biosphere. The patterns of continuity developed by systemic thinking about body, nature, place and community grow out of curiosity and respect that encourage awe and wonder. Bateson contends we are "not what we know but what we are willing to learn" (p.8). Hearing each other's stories outside of assumptions requiring proof and blame in an open-ended investigation of interrelated phenomena creates understanding, acceptance and bonding. Developing different modes of interaction and understanding that range from the poetic to the analytical and everything in between lays the groundwork for shared accountability, collaborative intelligence and collective action.

Intercultural storytelling enables students to be the subject of their own stories outside of dogma and rigid ideology. Instead of perceiving our stories as deficits, they become life affirming. By listening to each other's stories, the living experience of

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students is shared by all. Below one of my students who is part Hmong from Cambodia described why she thought it is so critical to know one's own story and hold it in the light.

> It is heartbreaking because culture is a part of you so instead of trying to run away from it one should embrace it. Knowing who you are and where you come from is so important to me because it gives me a sense of belonging, knowing myself, where I've come from … I come from a family where the opportunity for education was minimal, where my mom didn't get a high school education and I get the chance to come to college which makes me appreciate having a good education. I see my mom struggle and how hard she works. I just want to get a good job to take care of her.

One semester an African-American student brought in his family scrapbook, which recorded in great detail his family's slave history on a local plantation. It was a real eye-opener for all of my students—African-American, Latino, white, and others. The living story of this student's past was a powerful reminder that the brutal history of racial discrimination in this country still lives most powerfully in the South. The existing struggle among rural and urban Southerners to make sense of the past while living in the present is an ongoing project that requires more sharing, hearing and taking to heart each other's stories.

Many of my students were from rural Southern communities in which family, love of community, and devotion to God and country are the norm. Reminders of the system of slavery that existed some 150 years ago were deeply troubling and filled them with anguish. Many students openly shared their concerns that their parents and/or grandparents were intolerant of diversity or just plain racist. They struggled to accept their own heritage of poverty, violence or ignorance. Many were the first generation to

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attend college, and many others struggled to accept their pasts. They loved their families dearly and saw their elders as heroes and heroines, but struggled to understand their unawareness on some critical issues.

Considering both the strengths as well as the weaknesses of our elders prevents an idealization of our history and allows an understanding of the rich texture of our imperfect pasts. My students uncovered a rich tapestry of cultural stories from their ancestors that they never would have discovered—stories that gave them great insight into their own cultural roots and greater acceptance of the pain and suffering shared by all.

Abram (1996) speaks of a realignment with reality that isn't hatched in our heads and then projected into the future, allying ourselves to achieve an abstract vision. Instead, he proposes an ecological approach that "strives to enter, ever more deeply, into the sensorial present, to become ever more awake to the other lives, the other forms of sentience and sensibility that surround us in the open field of the present moment" (p.272).

Greene (1978) urges deepening an awareness created by reflections of our own human biography. Seeing each other's history reduces the distance between particular lived experience and the collectivity of others. Turning our attention to shared history promotes the development of generative themes and the facilitation of lasting common bonds. Intercultural storytelling brings to light the living experience of place, the shared familial patterns of kinship ties, and invaluable stories of love, struggled and survival.

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The process encourages greater interrogation of official stories perpetuated by corporate media and hate-mongers that keep us divided and disconnected from each other.

In this chapter, I address what cultural and educational practices matter most in developing the mutuality, solidarity and trust required to forge collaborative intelligence rooted in our participation in larger ecological systems. How do we inspire audacious global imaginations capable of shifting emphasis away from separation, division, and categorical imperatives that prevent our insertion into a world gone mad with desire and disconnection?

Gramsci (1995) aimed to construct a whole conception of the world by understanding the "ensemble of relations," in which we share with others (Kehoe, 2003, p. 5). To see ourselves *in* others—outside of dominant cultural stories of competition, divisions, borders and boundaries—we are able to see the similar patterns and generative themes that co-create human/earth bonds and collective consciousness as well as the wisdom and sense to live in common.

Pessimism of the Intellect, Optimism of the Will, Solidarity *with* Others

One of Gramsci's (1971) greatest contributions to the world was his understanding of how cultural production creates hegemony or *consent* to practices inherently against our own interests. His famous saying, "pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will" cited throughout his *Selection from the Prison Notebooks* (1971) is about the necessity of developing a critical consciousness of how knowledge is produced

while maintaining the conviction that people have the strength to transform structures of power.

Many counter pose critique to searching for commonality as mutually exclusive efforts. I believe both strategies are essential in creating a just, fair, loving and sustainable world. When we realize the very structures of agency, ways of knowing, and imagination are shaped by complex and contradictory forms of discourse, it is easy to become alienated and cynical. Gramsci advocated for a deepening of criticality that does not annihilate optimism of the will.

Understanding how the socially produced dimensions of our habits affect our attitudes and belief systems is critical to the development of alternative communities of care and respect. Gramsci argued the way to undermine the old is to construct the new. It's not enough to wish, hope and imagine a more just world. Working within the difficult conditions we experience to construct anew requires the consciousness and skills to plunge into unknown territory— accepting responsibility to negotiate and mediate differences with others. It requires a genuine hope and faith in the abilities of others (Sassoon, 2000, p. 84).

According to Sassoon (2000), who wrote about Gramsci's relevance to contemporary politics, pessimism of the intellect can only be constructive if, while remaining skeptical, one avoids cynicism. Cynicism of the will prevents the possibility of contributing to fundamental change. Weary cynicism of the intellect without accompanying hopefulness and the will to act for future possibilities leads to defeatism. Combining both allows for a *wider* conversation and collective action that is sustainable.

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Giroux's body of work focuses on the relationship between culture and power in education. He discusses public pedagogy as a moral and political practice that operates both inside academia and in the outside community and world, thus "expanding its reach across multiple sites and spheres" (2000, p. 135). Giroux points to schools as cultural sites that reproduce existing dominant values and practices rather than embody the rich, conflicting social and political values of the multiple cultures that make up the polity.

Critically understanding history and critical media literacy are essential components to creating participatory democratic communities. Through a thorough examination of how culture is produced and reproduced through stories and images, students can begin to question their own assumptions and ways of adapting (therefore consenting) to a world gone mad with destruction, denial and greed.

Cutting Through Clutter and Noise

The importance of understanding one's place in the world is complicated by the bombardment of thousands of commercial messages daily that tell stories about what to value and how to behave. Media and cultural critic Sut Jhally (1998) explains how these messages play to the core of our inner desires for love, attention, affection, emotional happiness, security and sensory pleasure in his classic film *Advertising and the End of the World* (Jhally, 1998). My students seem deeply affected by this film.

The constant barrage of fragmented, contradictory messages—and powerful market based ideological appeals—can get in the way of making sense of individual and collective consciousnesses that stems from our own rootedness. Competing stories of love, community, compassion and forgiveness are pushed to the margins of our

consciousness and concern as we take in the consistent messages of a plastic culture of narcissism and distain for others.

Jhally (1998) believes stories are the way culture talks about itself. In his powerful film, *Advertising and the End of the World,* he talks about competing narratives that inundate people with in-your-face desires for escape, excitement and unending pleasure. Keeping people focused on the search for individual pleasure and consumption makes huge profits for commercial interests and diverts attention away from the serious problems that plague our world.

We live in a world in which "common sense" is defined by corporate constructions of knowledge based on competition, narcissism, ego and violence. If the role of educators is to help our students break through the binding "official knowledge", an understanding of the hegemonic ways that minds are colonized is essential.

What role does an understanding and appreciation of place play in this process? A regional and specific historical understanding of place helps break through the myths created by a homogeneous culture driven by corporate interests. Educators can encourage students to dig deeper to investigate their own meaning. Telling better stories and sharing our own rich socio-ecological histories are ways to redefine "common sense" as "the sense to live in common."

How do we move forward to maintain a respect and appreciation for the complex multiple and competing ways people are situated historically by place and culture? What is the balance between an intellectual understanding of how culture is constructed and

produced and the process of creating the necessary webs of respect and solidarity to address the problems and opportunities of the crisis before us?

The contradictory forces that make it difficult for many people to "settle" comfortably into one social space are highlighted by intersections of class, gender, race, place, religious beliefs, historical context and other forms of difference. As we navigate between diverse and changing frameworks of meaning, we are more able to find each other and experience the patterns and similarities between our storied lives. Appreciating our interrelationship and interdependence enables us to experience powerful connections that have great potential to challenge patterns of destruction and violence.

The understanding of our own particular history of place, and past historical traditions, enables us to struggle over the larger, more ideological cultural meanings that permeate our subconscious world. "Unless we approach the complex and specific relations among culture, power, and pedagogy, we risk surrendering" to the larger cultural myths that infuse our consciousness (Grossman, p. 92).

The specific culture of everyday life allows for popular differences, which are practiced, produced and reproduced by the people themselves and passed down from generation to generation (Gramsci, 1971). Since there can be no social change without social difference, the control of how social difference is perceived has always been a strategic objective of those in power. Giroux (2000) concurs with Gramsci and questions how certain meanings, created under specific historical conditions, become more legitimate as representations of reality. He questions how accepted assumptions become

common sense and therefore the dominant social order, shaping future discourse in powerful ways that do not contribute to democratic life.

The social struggles over the politics of everyday life are located in the broad spaces of community life. Educators intervene within these cultural spheres where students are struggling to make meaning outside of mixed and contradictory media messages. Students become empowered by exploring how meaning is created to legitimate particular practices, ideologies and social relations.

Grossman argues for a radical pedagogy in which contradictions are not set concretely within a coherent structure, but as an ongoing *struggle* to construct and reconstruct meaningful interconnections between social, political, cultural and economic understanding. He urges educators to take up the challenge of intervening as both critics of the commercialization of the media and culture and as educators helping our students decipher their own meanings. Enabling our students to understand the contradictory forms of empowerment and disempowerment is one piece of a process that must also keep alive the powerful cultural traditions and practices of the human and earth community that already exist.

The process of interrupting the culture of death and destruction is multidimensional. Critical public pedagogy supports the development of citizens capable of exploring more deeply how knowledge is constructed and consciousness developed to maintain consent of the governed. While critical thinking and critical media literacy are essential, I believe our role as educators and leaders is to seek a greater balance between understanding and action—critique and optimism of the will. Understanding how

corporate power divides, dominates and controls the public mind is critical. Inspiring creative, imaginative alternatives to existing destructive forces involves a deeper connection to the earth that surrounds all that we do.

Telling a better story requires going beyond mere critique, contestation and resistance. Optimism of the will requires the agency, inspiration and skills to "imagine otherwise." The ability to imagine otherwise requires emotional and physical connections that " give thought wings." Critical reflection and critique of oppressive systems are insufficient without providing alternatives to actively involve, inspire and invigorate all community members to participate in our own renewal and survival.

A non-hegemonic approach to the use of critical inquiry is to understand that "its emancipatory potential always depends upon the cultural context, and its use needs to be balanced by giving attention to what needs to be conserved" (Bowers, 2006, pp. 78–79). By paying more attention to what needs to be conserved, we must also be more conscious of the well being of the whole community commons. This includes greater responsibility and care for the social and environmental practices of the human community.

It will take great creativity, humility, collaborative intelligence and imagination to bring forth alternative forms of knowing and living that can turn the tide of worldwide environmental destruction. In the next section I discuss two requisite ingredients for cultivating the agency, collectivity and creative power that reawaken new possibilities.

Participatory Consciousness/Collaborative Intelligence

Ah, not to be cut off,
Not through the slightest partition
Shut out from the law of the stars.
The inner—what is it?
If not intensified sky,
Hurled through with birds and deep
With the winds of homecoming.
 (Rilke, 1995 reprinted in Abram 1996, p. 261)

My mission in life has been to cultivate a world alive with love, compassion, respect and care. In the past I participated in this world through the concrete experience of my work with children and families within local communities and local community struggles for peace and justice. Over time I've come to realize how the academic world of ideas, abstractions and rationalist critique robs our young people of their rich natural heritage and connections to the social and ecological world. Through constant dissection, deconstruction and instrumentalist thinking, our students are not encouraged to search for collective meaning and eco-ethical care.

Bai (2009) believes we are wired for participatory consciousness. She advocates for an epistemological shift from the conceptual, abstract and rational mind to the "sensuous, emotive, empathic and participatory" (p. 139). Abram (1996) reminds his readers that active participation in the world involves the experience of active learners—and the interplay between the feeling and perceiving body and the world itself.

The solution does not lie in moralistic persuasion, prescriptions or rationalist scolding. People learn by feeling inspired, connected, deeply engaged and alive with anticipation and joy. Bai (2001) believes embodied education "is about disciplining

ourselves to see rather than to look at, to hear rather than listen; (and) to feel rather than

react" (p. 93). The development of an animated consciousness is facilitated by a world

alive with poetry, music and song—and with rich feelings of love and possibility,

celebration, and joining with others.

Becoming Lovingly Relational

It is not until our "whole being becomes respectfully and lovingly relational to the

world that we can truly practice respect, (and) love" (Bai, 2009, pp. 145–146). Creative

power—the creative power of love and the creative power of the web of life in all its

preciousness and infiniteness, cannot be guaranteed from supernatural laws from above.

Welch (2000) believes when people are free to be creative and deeply engaged in life,

their responses will lead to an ever-expanding work.

Watching my students spiritedly and enthusiastically participating in an

energizing activity, and physically and emotionally engaged with each other, I observed a

learning community alive with creative energy, joy, humor and mutual care. Spretnak

(1999) believes when human cultures enrich and build on that physical level of

community, we encourage rich eco-social system experiences. When we deny and ignore

the experience that exists in the web of life, we destroy and alienate.

Martusewitz (2009) asks what it would mean if knowledge were understood as

wisdom that evolves from our participation into a larger ecological system. She refers to

the concept of *collaborative intelligence,* developed by Susan Griffin (1996), as "a

complex interactive system of communication and transformation where elements enter

into relationship with each other" (p. 254). By developing fluid relationships with a

continuous process of exchange, adaptation, fusion and transformation we create new and emergent patterns of collaborative intelligence and participatory consciousness.

How is it that we forget and become removed so easily from the wonders and awe of our natural surroundings, from the earth that nourishes us, and from the natural environment that we destroy in our pursuits for achievement and gain? Thomas Berry, a local cultural historian and "passionate priest," believes the law of the prophets leave out our connection and respect for the earth and all of life forms.

This separation has lead to our alienation from the human and natural world. We are completed by our connections to the natural world. We become inwardly enriched, sustained and nurtured by our sensuous experience in nature and the emotional world. A lack of love, appreciation and capacity for intimacy with the natural world leads to detachment, isolation and destructiveness.

After observing this separation in my students and my own inability to reach them through determinist perspectives focusing on critique, I found more effective, deeply engaging, experiential strategies to spark their souls and enliven their willingness to learn. As my students found each other and became more emotionally, physically and aesthetically engaged, I felt inspired by the possibilities of developing mutual trust, care and reciprocity. We moved back from the conceptual, abstract and analytically rational to the "sensuous, emotive, empathic and participatory" which "changed the very texture, tone and color of their consciousness" (Bai, 2009, p. 139).

Civic Engagement

It seems that we have become so adept at analytic critique, judgment, categorical thinking and separation that the necessity within a democracy for participation and democratic decision-making is seriously threatened. The praxis of reflection and action that Freire (2001), Greene (1978) and many other progressive educators celebrate will not come to fruition without feeling, love, understanding, healing and engagement in the public sphere.

The deep disengagement felt by the multitudes of people turned off to public life threatens the possibility of democratic living as well as the necessary mutual possibilities for collective action, care and responsibility. Without *feeling* injustice, the pain and suffering of others, the destruction of the earth, or the wondrous world of nature that enlivens our spirit, it is difficult to be motivated to participate in courageous acts of repair.

One of my students aptly described this realization in a reflection of an article written by Shapiro (2006) about educating against violence and for peace.

> Upon first reading Shapiro's article, I thought the primary principle was affirming the sacredness of all people; being able to see the supreme being in others. I thought, yes, this is the tenet from which all others flow. Now I believe it is compassion and empathy because these are values that we feel. When we feel the injustice, the hatred, the pain, the anger to which others are subjected, we will change. We will change not only ourselves, but the whole system.

Evelyn Fox Keller wrote *A Feeling for the Organism* (1983) as an account of the work of plant-geneticist Barabara McClintock. Above all, McClintock believed it was

essential to her work to "have a feeling for the organism" and to understand "how it grows, understand its parts, and understand when something is going wrong …" (p. 198).

Understanding the deep crisis that exists in the world requires feeling the devastation and impending doom enough to insist on participating in its repair and renewal. Critical media literacy enables a comprehensive understanding of the ways people are persuaded by media distortions of pleasure, consumption and individual personal gain. Feeling the need to participate in creating counter-hegemonic acts of solidarity, mutual responsibility and repair require something much deeper. The development of collective intelligence and urge to participate with others requires a reawakening of all our senses that can spark collective action and care for others.

Below one of my students describes how schools should be connected to our local communities and the families in it. This student has his sleeves rolled up and is ready for action. He described creating drug rehab programs at night for parents and students, dinners at the school cafeteria for those who need it, and job training and tutoring programs for parents who may need to learn to read themselves.

> As a society we should have more communities where the school is the backbone of the community not like the old paper mill that's getting shutdown. If we put effort into our schools and have programs that reach out to the families letting them know that someone cares about them enough to help out, the children will prevail, and become productive members of society. Help the single mom with three kids find a job that will give her a chance to support her children, for instance maybe a bus driver at the local school.

Recovering All Our Senses

    The Tides turn
    Over and over against an eroding shore
    Sun sets to rise framing the cracked exteriors
    Tiny eyes flutter close curled up on a floor
    These are the days where right is judged wrongly
    The parceling of life makes fat pockets for some
    Here we stand divided by color and creed
    Though we open our doors and invite all to come
    Your dreams will be answered in a short little while
    Take a number and wait in this room if you please
    Six turns down the hall, fourth door on the right
    All the other doors are locked and you must earn the keys
    So we portion and limit the ability to live
    While we spread great wonders of what a life could be
    Standing in the wreckage of society's good intentions
    At last in suffering we all agree
    That more and more come
    Yet less and less see
        (Student, 2007)

    The above poem was written by one of my students whose father had worked in the coal mines before he became too ill to do so. This student's poem expresses the deep fear, concern and alienation so many of my students have shared with me about their future. Through the process of socialization and indoctrination into a system of competition, commercialization and alienation, too many of the young people I meet today seem more connected to their cell phones, computers and iPods than anything else.

    The first day of class always shocks my senses anew to the alienation and numbness of too many of my students. They sit stone-faced, looking downward, disengaged in conversation or connection of any kind. How to awaken their senses

becomes my first priority as I carefully engage them in interactive discussions, activities and energizers that get them out of their seats and into the world of feeling and emotions.

"Reincorporating the knowing body, the creative cosmos, and the complex sense of place into the ways in which we think about life would re-constitute our sense of nearly every public debate and crisis" (Spretnak, 2004, p. 8). Honoring the diversity of life and the communion we experience with the profound interrelateness of life can lead to the cultivation of an unfolding experience of grace and joy required for the healing of the earth.

In my work as a teacher I've consistently been struck by the natural connectedness that young children experience with the natural world, "a feeling of unbroken continuity" with a special tree, leaf, rock or animal. The natural curiosity of young children sparks my own joy and wonder of life. Many traditional native cultures express a similar earth-based connection or spirituality—this sense of interconnectedness that is cultivated throughout their lives.

Deloria (1999) writes about the Sioux as well as other tribes who interpreted the scheme of life to eventually lead toward the production of human beings. Other forms of life came first and demanded a reverence and respect not seen in Western scientific thought. Although Indians hunted and fished for wild game, Deloria pointed out that an effort was made to not take out animals and birds until they had led a full life. All of life was considered sacred. Every part of the earth is physical and spiritual source of energy that directly affects everyone, because we are also an integral part of the great family of life (Lake-Thom, 1997).

It saddens me to observe so many of my students who no longer maintain a connection with the earth. Although many of them look forward to our outdoor meditation, others don't want to be outside for fear of bugs, wind, rain or other discomforts. They have been brought up to think that education is, after all, an endeavor of the mind. In many schools, being outdoors and communing with nature have become a thing of the past. One semester during an outdoor activity another teacher came out and said, "Excuse me but we're learning in our classroom."

Spirituality is too often separated into a box and practiced at our churches but not in our daily lives or connected to the awe and wonder of the natural world. For many of my students who are religious, a sense of spirituality is harnessed into rigid dogmas and rules from the Bible that often do not translate into a consistent practice of care and responsibility. I am too often reminded of Bauman's notion of adiaphorization, or the moral disconnectedness and psychic numbness that exists in a culture of consumption and disconnection. To see this on the faces of young people is deeply disturbing.

According to Abram (1996) the phrase *making sense* refers to how our senses are enlivened, freed from the comforting ways of knowing and speaking that hold us back from renewing and rejuvenating a *felt sense* of awareness. The perpetuation of human reason–centered and hyper-separated epistemologies reduces our ability to empathize with the non-human world. The world of imagination can be seen as the world of the senses—outside the world of linear logic and fixed reasoning.

One of my students expressed her worry that students will not be able to go beyond simple questions to search for possibilities, not prescriptions. Her fear for future

teachers is the challenge of re-engaging students already disconnected from a world that

shares their hopes and dreams:

> I have a fear in the future classrooms will become "teacherproof," which means they
> will lack a person who recognizes children are whole people with bodies, minds,
> emotions, intentions, hopes, dreams and souls.
> People learn by *feeling* inspired, connected and deeply engaged with all of life.

To become involved with others through a process of respect, compassion,

generosity and care, we can live and generate "lovingly relational"(Bai, 2009, p. 146)

lives, capable of finding each other to forge collaborative intelligence, enjoy mutual

celebration and prioritize the critical collective work ahead to preserve and sustain life.

The knowing body—experience, feelings, senses and emotions—greatly increases our

abilities to see beyond the exclusive boundaries created by a mechanistic world.

Embodied Knowing and Learning

Plumwood (2002) views the body as a source of non-linguistic and non-cognitive

knowledge. Outside of compartmentalized political, social, economic and psychological

considerations is an interrelated, dynamic system of self-organizing, differentiating, and

struggling between balance and disequilibrium.

Sherry Shapiro (2008) talks of providing a transcendent space to enable the

experience of "new or alternative possibilities that are outside of our 'taken-for-granted'

life practices…a space that encourages and nurtures the ability to imagine different ways

of feeling and being in the world" (p. 185). Shapiro discusses how the body is grounded

in the memory of experience. If more attention were paid to such experience, she believes

there would be great potential for the "dynamics of human compassion and barbarism" to be explored and understood simultaneously.

Greene (1978) discusses the dilemma within our society of the institutionalization of "benign neglect." Her focus has been on the artistic aesthetic in contemporary curriculum, which has the potential to arouse people into a greater *wide-awakeness* to life. She quotes Alfred Schutz, who terms wide-awakeness as "a plane of consciousness of highest tension…in an attitude of full attention to life and its requirements" (p. 169).

Greene views the aesthetic experience as a "different kind of breathing" that enables us to question preconceived ideas and linear, routine thinking to a far more expansive, imaginative wide-awakeness—to venture into unknown territories and challenge pre-existing beliefs. Searching for aesthetic meaning allows us to explore both "multiple realities" and the infinite meanings of existence.

Greene (1978) discusses the impact of distorted relations and myths created by mass communication and the multiple manipulations of the technological world that impact the educational process. Aesthetic experience transcends taken-for-granted assumptions and broadens our ability to experience a wholeness and harmony with all of life. Art forms transcend routine experience, creating a greater understanding of our commonalities and the universality of life that allows us to feel deeply human and alive to present and future possibilities to commune act with others.

Augusto Boal (1985) whose collaboration with Paolo Freire was exemplified in *The Theatre of the Oppressed*, distinguishes between an aesthetic process and the aesthetic product. He argued that the aesthetic process is not a work of art but a means of

developing capacities that transcend meaning. Artist sensibilities penetrate the unities of our being, searching for the complementary parts or identity with the other. The dynamic is in motion, never fixed, changing and adapting as new experiences alter meaning.

I've learned to provide my students with a rich array of embodied experience that gets them up from their chairs, moving, emoting and communing. My classes begin with an "energizer activity" led by a student. The various disciplines represented, strengths and expertise of my students allows for various interactive games, cultural sharing, dance, poetry, role-plays and shared reflections. The presence of music majors, elementary and secondary education, science, drama, physical education, special education and other disciplines create fertile ground for engaging and interactive activities.

In addition, we write poetry, visit museums, participate-in local community organizations as service-learning projects, share our ancestral stories, role-play, dramatize community problems and celebrate life together. The following reflection is from one of my students after participating in a role-play, which was developed by one of my student colleagues. The drama follows watching a film about U.S. public school desegregation and the experience of the Little Rock Nine. She played a black reporter who was beaten by a mob of angry protesters.

What teenager really wants to sit in a chair from 8-3pm and listen to teacher after teacher yap about boring educational stuff? We need to see the world of literature and history collide … During class activity I remember staring at the photo of the Black reporter and really trying to think "What is this guy thinking?" "What is going on in his mind?" "What is motivating the instigators?" I never would have thought to ask myself these questions if I had simply seen the photo sitting in a history book. Role-

playing assignments really force-students to think hard about what they
are learning.

Bai (2009) talks of reanimating our senses as the starting point to understand our
connections to a world of biotic community. Being lovingly relational begins with
experiencing our embodied connection "to soil, soul, and sole" (p. 146). Sole refers to the
soles of our feet as we walk mindfully on the earth restoring peace and harmony.

Palmer (1999) also wrote about Barbara McClintock, the famous biologist and
geneticist whose life work was to study genetic transposition in ears of corn. Having a
"feel for the organism," according to Palmer, is about embodying our teaching with a
sense of the sacred. For Palmer this means recovering our sense of respect for the
preciousness of all other beings. "She knew it was possible to have that kind of
relationship with all creatures and all forms of being because she understood their
sacredness and approached them with simple respect" (p. 167). Palmer believed the
human soul is like a wild animal.

> If we go crashing through the woods, screaming and yelling at each other for it to
> come out, it will evade us all day and night. We cannot beat the bushed and yell at
> each other and expect the precious inwardness to emerge. But if we are willing to go
> into the woods and sit quietly at the base of the tree, this wild thing will, after a few
> hours reveal itself. Out of the corner of your eye, we might glimpse something of the
> wild preciousness we are all looking for. (p. 164)

Coming to our senses at this time of deep cultural disengagement and genocide
will require great courage and honesty. Perpetuating reductionist theories and dualistic
discourses that fragment people and ideas into simplistic categories may be temporarily
comforting but does not affirm our capacity to take a collective leap into the world of

unknown possibility. Recovering our connective capacities to all of life outside of rigid

dogmas and idealized formulas is our best chance for human/earth survival.

Lather (2007) talks of getting *engaged in the mess,* which one of my students

also affirmed. In discussing the "use value" of research, she asks the larger questions of

what it means to be of use—"accountable to complexity, multiplicity, becoming,

difference, the yes that comes from working the stuck places, the beyond that is in what

haunts us" (Lather, 2007, p. 351).

While I remain haunted by the specter of the future, my greatest hope stems from

the voices of my students and their ability to grow and change and engage in the mess of

life. Their ability to find each other, becoming more open to hearing each other's stories

of pain and suffering and joy, is life affirming. As they are led to recognize the assets

found in human and natural environments close to home, including traditional cultural

practices, they are joining millions of others around the globe, refocusing on the strengths

and capacities of local systems.

The massive sprouting of local and global citizen-based organizations is

countering the harrowing destructiveness of our world. Hawken (2007) believes we

will either come together as one interconnected system of people and planet or we

will disappear as a civilization. "To come together we must know our place in a

biological cultural sense, and reclaim our role as engaged agents of our continued

existence" (p. 165).

The disintegration of our social and environmental world reflects a "prior disorder

of thought, imagination and perception" (Orr, 1994, p. 2). The resulting destruction and

disconnection from nature and each other requires a reawakening of all our senses including the sense to live in common. In Chapter V, I discuss concrete suggestions for educators, community organizers and civic leaders to renew, rebuild, and recreate the community commons. It will require "a renewed attentiveness … to this perceptual dimension that underlies all our logics, through a rejuvenation of our carnal, sensorial empathy with the living land that sustains us" (Abram, 1996, p. 69).

Local systems of care that take into consideration the natural world, and the limited local and global resources to be shared by all are emerging and flourishing around the world. People are coming to their senses to repair, heal and restore our human/earth connections. With greater collaborative intelligence and participatory consciousness, a renewal of an ethic of care and collective responsibility for human/earth relations—great possibilities await us. With an improvisational ethic and affirmation of life— with love and determination, courage and humility, and poetry and grace we will prevail.

On a day
When the wind is perfect,
the sail just needs to open and the world is full of beauty.
Today is such a
Day.

My eyes are like the sun that makes promises'
the promise of life
that it keeps
each morning

The living heart gives to us as does that luminous sphere,
Both caress the earth with great
Tenderness.
There is a breeze that can enter the soul.
This love I know plays a drum. Arms move around me;
who can contain their self before my beauty?

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Peace is wonderful,
But ecstatic dance is more fun, and less narcissistic;
gregarious He makes our lips

On a day when the wind is perfect,
the sail just needs to open
and the love starts

Today is such
a day
(Rumi translated by Ladinsky, 2002, p. 79)

CHAPTER V

RENEWING THE CULTURAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL COMMONS

If we will have the wisdom to survive
to stand like slow growing trees
on a ruined place, renewing, enriching it …
then a long time after we are dead
the lives of our lives prepare will live
here, their houses strongly placed
upon the valley sides …
the river will run
clear, as we will never know it …
On the steeps where greed and ignorance cut down
the old forest, an old forest will stand,
its rich leaf-fall drifting on its roots.
The veins of forgotten springs will have opened.
Families will be singing in the fields …
Memory,
native to this valley, will spread over it
like a grove, and memory will grow
into legend, legend into song, song
into sacrament. The abundance of this place,
the songs of its people and its birds
will be health and wisdom and indwelling
light. This is no paradisal dream.
Its hardship is its reality.
Wendell Berry (myinneredge.wordpress.com/category/wendell-berry/)

The interrelated crisis of human and environmental devastation, war, poverty, and the growing disparity between rich and poor has become more glaringly apparent and less able to conceal. The most urgent challenges facing the world are multidimensional and systemic and will require a deep and comprehensive restructuring of culture and consciousness.

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From colonialism to neo-liberal market fundamentalism, wars, occupations and invasions of other lands by governments beholden to the interests of transnational global enterprise continues. The deepening ecological crisis threatens the lives of billions of people around the world struggling to meet the most basic needs for food, water and safe housing. The number of wars, rape and genocide worldwide has increased as transnational globalization drives competition for power and control of resources and people.

The recent war in Iraq, which "officially" ended August 31, 2010, devastated the country and region. Estimates indicate more than 1 million Iraqis have been killed and millions more have been made homeless (justforeignpolicy.org.). Since 2001, the price tag for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan has topped the United States $1.09 trillion (nationalpriorities.org).

Recent reports indicate that the world's poorest countries have made little progress in eradicating poverty, and in the next five years 1 billion people will still be living on less than $1.25 a day (*News & Record*, September 21, 2010). This year alone more than 206 million gallons of oil spewed into the Gulf of Mexico, devastating an entire region of the United States (*News & Record*, September 18, 2010).

Bowers (2010) emphasizes the huge losses created by capitalist/industrial systems that steer transnational corporate globalization—the plundering, polluting and destruction of the earth's vital resources. From the recent and rapid melting of glaciers, which are the primary source of the world's drinkable water, to an increase in the number of droughts and flooding, the basic changes in the chemistry of the oceans has led to the

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collapse of major fisheries and the "disappearance of over thirty percent of the world's topsoil" (p. 4).

From Empire to Earth Community

Economic globalization has transformed the earth's resources and beings into commodities. People especially in the global south are robbed of their equitable share of the cultural and environmental commons (Shiva, 2005). Claiming resources around the globe that belong to indigenous people necessitates conquering and destroying local systems of governance and equitable distribution of resources. Millions of farmers, fishermen, craftspeople and workers are displaced and robbed of their share of economic, ecological, cultural and political space. Economic globalization extends corporate power to the ends of the earth.

The unequal distribution of wealth and resources is perpetuated by idealized Western myths and an ahistorical culture of denial and greed. Understanding the process of colonization of land and cultures is critical to the identification of future tasks. As Gramsci (1971), Jally (1998), Artz & Ortega-Murphy (2000), and Shiva (2005) reveal, the colonization of the public mind is a powerful tool of domination and control. Understanding how minds are colonized is key to developing alternative strategies for democratic communities that counter a culture of individualism, narcissism and disconnection.

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Market-fundamentalist culture tells us stories that emphasize individual fulfillment, unending consumption, competition for power and influence, and superficial, short-term, episodic relationships. The "survival of the fittest" mentality and a passion for individual rights and freedom fill the veins of the recently emerged, right-wing Tea Party movement in the United States. Through the power of persuasion and big-business media propaganda stressing individual rights, this movement supports dismantling parts of the federal government and is against public funding for basic needs and services that, in essence, protect their rights and freedom. Social security, quality health care and other basic gains historically fought for by people struggling for their rights creates freedom from want and disease and the right to a quality life from infancy to old age.

The discourse of consumerism and individual rights *delegitimates* a collective concern for community responsibility and care. The hegemony of market interests places the consumption of things over the human and environmental needs of the community commons. Through compartmentalized moral outrage we've become bystanders to the horrors of global repression, destruction and genocide.

Hyperseparation

To live sanely in a world amid such devastation, it's necessary to hyper-separate ourselves from the reality and consequences that we subconsciously condone by our own inaction. As we separate we find a myriad of ways to justify our own complicity to do harm and neglect the suffering of others. By compartmentalizing issues we isolate

ourselves from the complex systemic problems of the living world and our collusion with decaying systems of thought and action.

The recent oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico is a vivid example of the reckless behavior of transnational corporations and their disregard for the environment and residents where they seek profit at any cost to the local cultural and environment. The states along the gulf can be viewed as a microcosm of what goes awry when transnational corporations takeover local economies and run them in their own interests with little connection or commitment to sustaining local culture and community. It is critical to understand the meaning of transnationalism—corporations are not beholden to the laws of nations and regions in which they extract, destroy and plunder.

In the hours and days following Hurricane Katrina in August 2005, an alarming number of New Orleans residents were treated like cattle as they were herded into the Louisiana Superdome without food and water. My outrage over the horrors of Katrina is felt on a very personal level. As I've become more connected to my family heritage, I've become more deeply committed to exploring my French–Cajun cultural heritage rooted in New Orleans.

As I listen to the stories of my uncle, who was born in New Orleans and, at 95, is alive and well (in many respects), I feel a sense of rootedness that gives me pride, strength and solidarity with others. He and his cousin Uncle Al (aka Frenchy) were both merchant marines, and their zeal for life and freedom from domination says much about my family inheritance. As I've become more deeply connected to my own heritage from French Acadia to the French-Cajuns struggling in New Orleans to maintain their

cultural traditions against British colonization—my outrage and compassion is all the more sentient.

Identity Politics

Immediately following Hurricane Katrina, some local activists in Greensboro held a rally to protest the government's racist actions in New Orleans. While I agree racism played a key role in the neglectful and brutal response, there were other interrelated factors that led the government to disregard the needs of the people of New Orleans. I felt deeply saddened by the narrow response of this group who disregarded the many other local cultures, such as French Cajuns and other poor people not of African-American decent. This local group missed the opportunity to connect with local environmentalists and other communities of care. A strong, broad-based response would have been so much more effective and life sustaining.

"Fight-back" communities that focus exclusively on a single issue will not create the loving, trusting and *inclusive* community necessary to address the deepening crisis of global transnational capitalism. Centric communities often disregard the systemic and interrelated issues that could bring larger, broader and more inclusive communities together understanding diversity as a generating force. They overlook their own exclusionary practices, rigid and dogmatic assumptions, and hierarchical organizational methods that ignore the collective needs of the whole earth community. While struggling against racial oppression is clearly critical, especially in the South, linking up with others

to build the widest possible groundswell of solidarity and support would seriously

challenge the systemic crisis at its roots.

False separation based on identity and cultural practice is created among people

who are otherwise connected economically, culturally and ecologically. Fragmentation

into warlike, self-protecting communities of the same destroys the capacity to form

bridging networks of care and mutual responsibility in which we are all accountable and

expected to participate in renewal and restoration.

Purpel (1996) points out that dissenting voices and action often provide a great

deal of criticism but little in the way of affirmation. Criticism without affirmation "carries

with it the destructive elements of sterility and paralysis" (p. 360), while affirmation

without criticism is intellectually unsound and leads to self-righteousness and dogmatism.

Dualistic, "us-versus-them" constructions lead to both dogmatism and paralysis.

Kellner (1995) describes how many previous social change movements have

focused on "micropolitics," which fragment and "render many blind to the necessary

linkages and interconnections with others in opposition or in counter-hegemonic

struggles" (p. 20). He warns of the dangers of many cultural studies programs that have

developed a type of fetishism about resistance. In addition, certain forms of resistance

can replicate violence and glorify and strengthen brutal, masculine behavior.

Resistance that does not challenge the existing power structures depoliticizes the

meaning of the word. Struggling for meaning and representation within existing dominant

and oppressive forms of control deludes many into a simplistic, romantic notion of how

change occurs. Without questioning the overall systemic structures of corporate power,

without an understanding of the complexity and interrelatedness of various issues, many people and movements become obstacles to lasting change.

Focusing on separate, identity-related "causes" prevents an ecological and holistic appreciation of interrelated phenomena as well as a larger, wider, inclusive and more powerful response. Adopting the same divide-and-conquer methods of the dominant elites, many who focus on a piece of their own liberation fail to see their own complicity in patriarchal, competitive and anthropocentric values that hurt others and devastate the environment. "A thickly woven web of interlocking relationships is the surest way to lasting change" (Kissel, 2002).

Hyperseparation, polarization and dualistic thinking have become coping mechanisms for a stressed out, lost and fearful Western culture that seeks ways to tune out, disconnect and numb the affects of living in a life-destroying culture. Looking for blame in all the wrong places, people seek refuge in communities of the same that focus on what's wrong with others who do not adopt their rigid systems of thought. Finding another group to blame makes it easier to excuse oneself from joining in the struggle for alternative, ameliorative, structural change that includes the whole community commons. Excusing certain sectors from accountability due to past harm is disabling and prevents the full participation required by all to weave together a strong and interconnected web of care and solidarity required for long-term survival.

The politics of identity, isolated from the larger issues of economic globalization and market fundamentalism can overlook the social consequences of hyper-consumerism. With a focus on idealized individual emancipation, libratory practice, and racial and

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economic rights, we subconsciously collude with the values of the corporate world. By understanding the interrelated, systemic patterns of hierarchy and domination, we realize that the whole system of production, extraction, consumption and destruction must be challenged whole scale. Radically reversing the equation requires that people with diverse belief systems come together in large numbers with the generative power of collaborative networks to create collective webs of resistance, care and mutuality.

Divide and rule is one of the most effective tools used by dominant elites to maintain power. Encouraging people to maintain narrow us-versus-them ways of understanding and responding to complex problems fixates people into their discrete communities— and discourages an exploration of unifying commonalties and interconnected and interrelated concerns. Assessing blame to one sector of the population can be disabling to all members of a community. We are all response-able. Accepting diversity as a generating force creates enduring webs of solidarity and resistance capable of addressing the global social and environmental crisis.

Kellner (1995) reminds his readers how easily multiculturalism can be co-opted by corporate forces that appear to promote diversity when in fact promote superficial gains for individual groups disguised as diversity. Instead of a rich, thickly woven force for a radical shift that holds everyone accountable, people are persuaded by enticements for individual gains that mask more deeply rooted intertextual problems. Systematic approaches to understanding how differences are linked and intertwined are critical to any hope for lasting change. Overcoming narrow, exclusive perspectives facilitates the possibility of new horizons and urges the participation of all community members.

Relationship

Greunewald (2008) emphasizes the great irony of many academic programs that neglect the biodiversity of all of life. He believes more attention should be paid to relationship. Environmental and ecological studies underscore the interrelationship and interdependence of parts of systems. Decolonization studies are critical to address damage done by corporate powers. The notion of re-inhabitation is about how to learn to live together peacefully without doing further damage to other beings, both human and non-human. Decolonization and re-inhabitation studies go together.

> Pedagogically these two interrelated goals translate into a set of questions that can be put to any group of learners on any place on earth: What is happening here? What happened here? What should happen here? What needs to be transformed, conserved, restored or created in this place? (Greunewald, 2008, p.149)

Standing together, understanding and preserving history, living in the present while bringing to light the possibilities for a radical shift in priorities require a balance of forces that can illuminate future efforts. More and more social- and environmental-justice groups are beginning to link together with other organizations locally struggling with ways to inspire, organize, renew and re-create local communities to form enduring webs of interlocking relationships.

An eco-justice expands social justice perspectives to encourage an evolving consciousness of our interrelated connections within our local and global communities. Combining the multiple practices of diverse people around the world reclaiming their resources, livelihoods and interdependence is the practice of Earth Democracy (Shiva,

2005). Separating issues destroys the natural relationships in the web of life that are most able to combine and flourish in collective and inclusive democratic projects.

People are coming together in Greensboro, New Orleans, Michigan, and around the globe to build green housing, local food cooperatives, job-training programs, and collective efforts to mentor and re-skill our young people. I believe these new inter-disciplinary, transcultural and linked community efforts are our greatest hope for long-term survival. For more concrete examples of local communities engaged in these efforts around the globe, see Yes! Magazine at yesmagazine.org.

Hierarchy and Patriarchy

Freire (2001) warned how easily what he termed the "oppressed" can begin to adopt the values of the "oppressor." As people are submerged in the reality of adapting to the colonized mentality of the oppressor, it is easy to adopt the same consciousness and values. Once in power these same divisive and hierarchical structures are too often repeated. "Their ideal is to be men; but for them, to be men is to be oppressors. This is their model of humanity" (p. 45). The whole structure of the system that maintains hierarchy must be changed and this will take consistent challenges to all forms of domination and destruction.

In my local community, patriarchal systems are alive and well through faith-based and related social-justice communities. People seem blind to their own complicity in hierarchy that privileges men over women as long as they are struggling against another "ism". Many consider questions of the environment to be a white, middle-class issue. The

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self-righteousness of their stance toward earth others destroys the possibility of developing the necessary and interconnected webs of resistance and care. Developing a hierarchy of oppression as dogmatic truths and self-propelling myths maintains domination and excludes the wisdom of the web of life, including women's wisdom and leadership, throughout the community. Hierarchical and exclusive tendencies should be questioned consistently by everyone as serious threats to the possibility of a living, sustainable earth democracy.

Korten (2006) points to the elitist chauvinism of the early Greek/Athenian democracy, which was concerned primarily with maintaining the individual rights of a privileged minority. He points to the ways in which power seekers engage in manipulation and deception to thwart connections between people, which could threaten their ability to rule unencumbered. Dividing and categorizing people's skills into what they are rightly qualified to do, the elites considered themselves the thinkers and leaders, while others were relegated to more menial tasks. Women and minorities were excluded altogether.

In my research I have consciously avoided dualistic discourse that create binaries of 'us and them.' For this reason, I've hesitated to discuss the exclusion of women's wisdom so as not to detract from my focus on holistic efforts to reinvigorate, refocus, recreate and renew the whole community commons. I would be remiss, however, if, in my final summary, I did not mention how critical I believe it is for future community projects to become more inclusive of women's ways of knowing and being in the world.

The wisdom of women serves as a major regenerative force for the development of nurturing, respectful and loving communities of care and reciprocity.

Korten (2006) talks about the stories we live by as defined by male historians as "his-story, the heroic story of male warriors, male kings, male presidents, male religious leaders, male philosophers and male artists" (p. 106). People grow up surrounded by the many taken-for-granted assumptions that result from a male-dominated culture. As a result, competition, greed and violence have become accepted ways of "knowing" and living in this world. The bulk of acts of violence in the world is perpetuated by men. Power is male coded. The masculine power to control and destroy is dominant throughout the world.

Korten (2006) believes that to develop self-reliant local communities that prioritize mutual trust and respect with responsibility and care, greater participation by women in leadership roles is essential. He points to evidence from earlier centuries when human relationships with the earth community were relatively in balance, with greater equity and consensual decision-making the norm and people worshipped the nurturing power of the Goddess.

Macy (1998) talks of the Goddess of pre-patriarchal cultures that embodied a reverence for life, fairness and the abundance of the earth, as well as earth-based wisdom that is reflective of most indigenous cultures throughout the world. She points to Goddess wisdom that breaks down the dichotomies of mind over matter constructed by patriarchal structures of thought and action. From a commitment to relieve suffering, new ecological

frameworks "frees us from the prison cell of egocentricity and possessiveness, and ushers us into the gladness of harmonious responsible relationship with all that is" (p. 51).

Solidarity

An anthropocentric view of life that does not take seriously our embeddedness in nature serves to exclude the natural world from our consideration and responsibility. Plumwood (2002) talks of counter-centric strategies that disrupt common patterns of oppression by affirming the continuity and kinship for each other and earth others. She believes this will require more dialogical and communicative forms of democratic practice that are "open to the play of more than human forces and attentive to the ancestral voices of place and earth" (Plumwood, 2006, p. 229).

Rather than focus on freedom and liberation, Plumwood focuses on solidarity and asks how can we develop our capacity to stand with each other and our fellow inhabitants of the earth. Vague concepts of unity, identity and fusion are incapable of annihilating difference.

Solidarity with others requires respect while recognizing difference and boundaries. I believe this concept of solidarity is critical to honor and support diversity, bonding, caring and responsibility toward all of life. Standing with and along side of other humans and our earth others is critical to future survival.

Faith in spiritual powers that locate human lives in a larger galactic and/or faith in deities either Gods or Goddesses upholds human/nature dualisms that Plumwood (2006)

argues are pursued in many ways that are not life-affirming. Ecological forms of spirituality assist in recognizing the way that both human and earth others nourish life. An ethic of solidarity provides alternatives and ecological insights that enable the development of stronger connections among diverse beings and worlds that does not annihilate difference—but rather builds on the widest possible force for healing and repairing the world.

Bridging Networks

The insecurity felt as the social, environmental and economic crisis deepens is understandable. The tension, loss, fear and panic is channeled by many into reactive shock jock talk shows and tough talk by those faithful to power elites who remain unhindered as long as they can maintain divisions among the populace. Those who control the stories that people live by are able to control the cultural maps that teach people to value one system of ideas over another. Countering "freedom" and "individual rights" over care and collective responsibility is an effective dualism that prevents the necessary bridging, networking, mutuality and solidarity essential to create new systems that are able to balance conflicting needs.

Weaving and strengthening the fabric of community rather than exclusively building small, single-issue "fightback" groups requires collective and collaborative consciousness. Bloc (2008) suggests developing a more open and fluid process that

requires the humility to questions one's own assumptions and a willingness to learn from others who think differently.

He distinguishes between bonding networks and bridging networks. The bonding of like-minded people who mainly look inward and try to recruit people to their ideas often depends on adherence to fixed and rigid ideologies or ways of thinking that are closed to differing people and ideas. Bonding, especially among more vulnerable populations harder hit by brutality and neglect is important. Without self-reflection and inclusiveness, bonding networks can easily lead to self-absorbed, one-dimensional thinking and action.

Bridging networks look outward, are more open to collaboration and linkup with others to form new alliances of diverse ideologies and cultural ways of knowing, which are open to collaboration and shared partnerships. Bloc believes that these groups are more open to unfolding strategies that are multi-dimensional, transdisciplinary, and allow for collaborative and collective decision-making.

To nurture a radical shift in focus to comprehensive values and practice, far more attention must be paid to developing inclusive communities capable of solidarity and democratic problem solving. Enclosures create exclusions and lead to restricted practices that falsely identify others as the enemy. These exclusions are the hidden cost of corporate globalization and of our own consent to competitive relationships and exclusive, comforting communities of the same.

Collective solidarity as well as collaborative and ecological consciousness could knock down the barriers and divisions constructed and maintained by fear, greed and ego.

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As we compete with one another for rights and recognition outside of mutual responsibility and care, we discourage the possibility of community trust, mutual respect and collaborative possibilities.

Reacting to the recent Tea Party movement in the United States with a similar us-versus-them mentality will not address the root issues that create such unrest. Throughout history, similar disaffected communities have been appropriated by corporate interests, co-opting the outrage over the financial collapse of the capitalist system onto the government as proxy. Finding ways to cut across and establish connections with the understandable outrage bridges mutual concerns among polarized populations, creating the possibility of open and honest public dialogue about a myriad of interrelated issues.

Recently, I participated in a local effort, Impact Greensboro, created by a collaboration of different community stakeholders and organizations to bring diverse community leaders together in Greensboro. We were divided into several different sub-communities and work groups to discuss crucial community questions—housing/homelessness, education, economics/jobs and diversity/inclusion.

Although environmental questions were not separated out as an individual work group, they were included in our consciousness in other more concrete ways. Participating were local workers and leaders engaged in providing direct, on-the-ground community services, others providing advocacy and support, and others who were part of the academic "thinking" class. It was truly a bridging network.

It was an exhilarating community process, which took place over the course of a year. We shared teaching and learning, melded together on critical issues, fused, broke

apart, came together, split, merged, and held together mutually, co-created over time.

Some were focused on the immediate needs of the community, while others on helping to

devise a greater collective-future plan. Still others seem to hold onto ideologically pure,

rigid belief systems but did offer some interesting thoughts and insights. I was impressed

with my own work group on housing and homelessness. Composed of primarily African-

American women who were had been in the trenches doing the work—an understanding

existed of the importance of bridging, collaborating, listening to each other and

inclusiveness on all levels.

I appreciated the broad cross section of people who participated and the focus on

learning across difference that was essential for us to stay at the table. We were truly

intergenerational, intercultural and multi-racial. Pluralistic and inclusive democratic

practice is hard. Without the skills to think collaboratively, make decisions

democratically and act collectively the whole project would have fallen apart from

infighting and conflict.

There were some participants who got impatient and left the circle, and others

who were so mired in direct work that they grew frustrated with all the talking and

reflection. Accepting the need to agonize and struggle over the details as well as the

larger issues requires confidence in others and great patience and respect.

There are no quick fixes. Short-term solutions that don't take into consideration

long-term consequences toward the whole community and environmental commons get

in the way of lasting change. I believe the example of Impact Greensboro with its focus

on intergenerational, intercultural and collective-minded bridging networks and decision-making offers great hope for future unfolding possibilities

Compassion, awe and wonder, love and solidarity, and mutuality are created in communities that view diversity as a generating force, not as boxes to be carefully guarded with rules and restrictions for others. Seeking a balance between what needs to change and what needs to be conserved allows for a regeneration of constructive possibilities, which focuses on what can be done collectively that is inclusive of all community members and the natural world.

Without the ability to imagine otherwise, we will remain mired in determinist thinking and repeat the brutal mistakes of the past. Imagination and trust are essential ingredients to re-creating and restructuring. Re-imagining our lives requires of "many of us a humanity we've not yet mustered, and a grace we were not aware we desired until we tasted it" (Lopez, in Kingsolver, 2002, p. 39).

Community as the Commons

Connecting the individual with the social and collective, ethical, moral and spiritual with political, economic, and ecological concerns is essential to the development of a consciousness of interrelated ways of knowing and understanding the world.

The deep cultural and changing assumptions made by progressives that change occurs in as a linear and irreversible form of progress, and that progress itself is always positive needs to be challenged. Counter-centric practices that affirm continuity and

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kinship for each other and the earth have the greatest potential of disrupting current patterns of fragmentation and destruction.

Bowers (2005) reported from the First Nation of People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit in 1991 when African, Native American, Latino and Asian-American delegates defined the environment as "the totality of life conditions in our communities—air and water, safe jobs for all at decent wages, housing, education, health care, humane prisons, equity, justice" (Szaz 1994, pp. 151–152 in Bowers, 2005, pp. 14–15). Understanding the totality of life conditions demands a response that takes into consideration the whole needs of our communities. Prioritizing needs requires the collective voices of the whole community commons.

Bowers (2010) describes the cultural and environmental commons as the best expression of inclusive communities of care. Corporate globalization is based on enclosing the commons and privatizing goods and services that dispossess people and cultures. Enclosures create exclusions. A revitalization of the commons is partially based on an appreciation of daily experience that relies on the accumulated, intergenerational knowledge of local bioregions, including knowledge of mistakes made in the past. Who better to control and maintain local resources than the people themselves who live and work in their own locales and experience the benefits and consequences of local decisions.

Shiva (2005) believes that understanding the commons entails accepting that resources are owned, managed and distributed by the community itself. She refers to one

of India's preeminent historians (Dharampal), who traced the process of colonization and its affects on the development of social, cultural, and economic infrastructure.

In pre-British India the overwhelming majority of resources were owned and managed locally and regionally. Local economies supported education, indigenous medical practices, carpentry, irrigation systems, performing arts and so on. Through the process of British colonization, "this trend was reversed so that less than 10% of resources were left for local infrastructure to sustain the people and land and … 90% to run the empire" (Dharampal in Shiva, p. 27).

Reversing this trend requires a major shift from top down empire building to bottom up grassroots participation and organization. For cultures to become self-organizing and sustainable, the development of reciprocity requires participation of the whole commons, not just select pieces of it. Shiva considers living cultures, ecosystems and organisms as characterized by three basic principles.

1. diversity as a generating force;
2. self-organization, self-regulation and self-renewal;
3. reciprocity between systems or the law of return, the law of give and take (Shiva, 2005, p. 117).

Ecological, living democratic systems are based on the local creativity and skills of self-organizing activities. With creativity at the core of living economies, nature's diversity is mimicked, as is its self-organization, and interrelated complexity. "Every person, every group, every community is its own center, connected to others in mutuality and support" (Shiva, 2005, p. 72).

Bowers (2001) urges that we begin to ask: What is involved in becoming a member of a culture? Rooted in the multiple dimensions of life within the community—and in the traditions of intergenerational knowledge, we are far more able to recognize what needs to be preserved. By emphasizing and glorifying the power of the rational autonomous individual at the expense of an appreciation of the accumulation of intergenerational knowledge of the local bioregion, we disregard the importance of our responsibilities to the environment and to each other (Bowers, 2006, pp. 136–137).

Shiva (2005) emphasizes that diversity and pluralism are necessary forces in a non-violent world. The more diverse economies and cultures are the more interdependent and ecological they must become to accommodate the ebb and flow of change. Understanding diversity as a generating force requires the give-and-take of self-organization to meet diverse interests and competing needs of the cultural and environmental commons.

Hawken (2007) argues that the basic function of movement is linking. "Just as life assembles itself into chains, nonprofits aggregate either by linking up interests, people, or communities, or by linking to related organizations" (p. 175). Solving for pattern, according to Hawken, means that problems are perceived as symptoms of larger system failure.

Linking up with others to self-organize and renew to form systems of reciprocity and mutual care, recent localization movements are sprouting up around the globe, including the United States. Local, small-scale interdependent non-profits are spawning

micro-financing projects, green building, community theater, food cooperatives and systems planning connected to the larger world, not isolated from it.

Creative Disequilibrium

Berry (2001) argued that the totality of all of life precludes separation between human and nonhuman communities. Although we may feel we are making "progress" by destroying the natural world to advance the human world, in essence we are destroying our own homes and the lives of others. Berry asserted that, "the universe is composed of subjects to be commune with, not objects to be exploited" (p.36).

In an interview with Derrick Jensen (2002), Berry spoke of the great awakening experienced by millions of people around the globe who are realizing the desperateness of our situation. Berry was hopeful that organizations are emerging to fight the destruction of the cultural and environmental commons. Millions of people of all ages and cultures are acting on the strong evidence that things are not all right.

Berry (2002) insisted on maintaining a creative disequilibrium between how we differ and how we bond. He advocated an ethic of spontaneity that celebrates the wild and the sacred. It is out of great catastrophe that great creativity arises. We can struggle for justice and against past harm while we resolutely focus on creative possibilities that that re-imagine, recreate, renew, rebuild and revitalize enduring webs of meaning and care.

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The Work that Reconnects

The project of the great turning from empire to earth community (Korten, 2006) requires open-ended, inclusive communities capable of reversing harm done while living democratic and ecological principles that are founded on mutual responsibility, reciprocity and care. To imagine otherwise requires a move away from dualistic thinking to a focus on all our relations and connections.

Macy talks about the need to accept the uncertainty of life's work as the work that reconnects to life. "It's in the knife edge of uncertainty that we come alive to our greatest power" and creative energy (www.joannamacy.net/). Uncovering a larger consciousness out of the development of mutuality and kinship occurs through common work that arises through collaborative efforts. Uncovering our innate connections with each other and the earth enlivens and motivates the life-affirming work to heal and repair and restore.

Macy and Young-Brown (1998) talk about the line between good and evil that "runs through the landscape of every human heart" (p. 61). Our capacity to gain insight is about understanding our social and environmental context. However, insight alone into our profound interrelatedness is insufficient if not accompanied by compassion. We are rooted in dynamic relationships that have the potential to honor and prioritize our commonalties and heal past wrongs while remaining open to the uncertainty of the future.

Recovering awareness of context indicates the need to become more aware of our own historical network of relationships as well as the patterns that connect to others and our natural world. Preserving the past can only be understood in relation to

responsibilities in the present. I believe at this critical juncture in history we must direct our attention furiously toward the current social and environmental crisis that threatens our very survival.

Creating defiant global imaginations is about letting go of the need for the control and certainty of fixed dogmas and determined plans. Creating a foundation to explore collective alternatives to the current destruction of the earth requires a willingness to learn (Bateson, 2004), combined with more sensorial way of knowing, which enables "the vision of a common world root itself in our direct, participatory engagement with the local and the particular" (Abram, 1996, p. 270).

Macy (www.joannamacy.net/) stresses the necessity of allowing ourselves to feel the anguish, pain and disorientation as we become more aware of the suffering and destruction around the world. She terms this "our spiritual ripening" as we brave enough suffering to surrender accustomed assurances and "allow old mental comforts and conformities to fall away … standing naked to the unknown … Out of darkness, the new is born" (www.joannamacy.net/).

Ten Habits and Practices that Regenerate the Commons

Amid such devastation and division, it is difficult to fathom a response commensurate to the challenges before us. The task of re-envisioning and re-structuring a radically different path toward life-sustaining work is multidimensional. It will require great hardship and soul searching among activists, educators and community leaders who

are willing to reach across self-imposed divides to make greater efforts toward mutual consensus and broad-based collective action.

Like many of my generation, I struggle between despair and grief as well as hope and determination that new patterns in human/earth relations can congeal in enough time to save our vanishing world. Our capacity to reestablish interconnectedness within the cultural and environmental commons is wide open, yet fraught with habits and ways of knowing that prevent open-ended and democratic problem-solving. Below are ten basic practices I recommend for consideration in restoring, revitalizing, re-imagining and rebuilding our human/earth relations in all that we do.

1. Become comfortable with uncertainty.

Our collective wisdom is rich and complex. We can be faithful to earlier insights and flexible in understanding present perplexities. Moving away from certainty and dualistic, reactive assumptions of right and wrong allows for a rich historical and intertextual understanding of competing needs, issues and apprehensions.

Recognize that there are "infinite operations of difference" at play in our attempts to change the world (Martusewicz, 2001, p. 6). Truth is not a stable object. Focusing on predictable outcomes leads to stagnation and disappointment. The process of creating something new in relation with others widens our own lens and enables greater possibilities to emerge and evolve as an ongoing project welcoming all.

Macy (2007) describes a wellspring of body, soul and spirit capable of "arising out of the web of life, our mutual belonging is not a vain and sentimental dream" (p. 12).

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Imagining the world we want outside of fixed discourses and ways of understanding requires a willingness to address the boundaries we ourselves create that prevent mutual, collective possibilities. Develop the humility to learn from self-critical perspectives. Avoid making assumptions based on one's own cultural way of knowing the world. Look for what's right in what's wrong. Recognizing our own limitations of vision require stepping back from the need to control the story. By stepping back and learning to hear others perspectives, we place ourselves among others in non-hierarchical relations.

Avoid negating dualisms. Before continuing to divide and conquer, assume and judge with comforting illusions of grandeur and self-righteousness—practice listening, walking in another's shoes and taking to heart the perspectives of others. Practice belief and doubt. Our culture prioritizes doubt, critiques and division. With a focus on belief (Elbow, 1986), practice feeling another's pain, witnessing their history and embracing the each other's contradictions.

"Seek first to understand before being understood" (Covey, 1989). Recognize our own limitations of vision for creative change and survival. To imagine and re-create something new we must first be able to develop the humility to reconsider our own strongly held systems of belief and the probability of getting things wrong at least some of the time. Consider the unintended consequences of all our actions.

2. **Develop more rooted cultural and ecological approaches. Think long-term.**

Include the environmental commons in all that we do. Our best hope lies in our ability to learn new patterns of engagement with each other and the biosphere. Develop

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an ecological approach that strives to go deeper into the sensorial world, "letting the vision of a common world root itself in our direct, participatory engagement with the local and the particular" (Abram, 1996, p. 270).

The multiple dimensions of life within a community are rooted in an understanding of the traditions of intergenerational knowledge—an understanding of the place, land, water and air we share and our interconnections with each other. We can learn from natural primordial peoples who maintain a deep sense of relatedness to all innate phenomena and beings. The culture of most indigenous peoples includes a deep respect and relationship with our earth others—the trees, animals, sun, moon and stars that are our teachers as well as relatives of the planet.

Thinking long term requires a concerted effort to divest ourselves of that which continues to divide, discriminate and destroy the possibility of finding each other to co-create enduring webs of community and care. Developing the humility to step out of heads and into the shoes of others to search for the common bonds that hold us together in unshakable solidarity requires slowing down and appreciating the multiple dimensions of life that interconnect and are interdependent.

3. Support intergenerational, intercultural and inter-subjective webs of eco-ethical care and responsibility. Bear witness to each other's history.

The ongoing marginalization of intergenerational knowledge and indigenous wisdom, which was previously the basis of a less consumer-dependent lifestyle, has led to the colonizing power of industrial culture. We have become isolated from our own

environment and from the intergenerational knowledge and patterns of support that once provided communities with a sense of mutual accountability.

Connecting with our particular history leads to an appreciation of the experience of our ancestors that root us in enduring networks of care. Place-based intergenerational knowledge and practices contribute to a revitalization of the community commons, which has been destroyed by the process of industrialization. Shifting our ways of understanding the world to an appreciation of local bio-regional knowledge, intergenerational wisdom and relationship to place could radically alter all our relations.

Sharing each other's history cuts through dominant interpretations of historical events. Discovering the patterns, similarities and commonalities of our histories encourages non-dualistic understanding outside of pre-determined belief systems and more openness to emerging organic possibilities.

Understanding each other's history is the first step in reconstructing a mutually supportive and enlivened vision of interconnected webs of care. Turning our attention to shared history promotes the development of generative themes and the facilitation of lasting common bonds. Seeing each other's history reduces the distance between specific lived experiences and the collective experience of all species.

Inter-subjective relations encourage reciprocal and non-hierarchical approaches to ecological understanding. Human cultures are nested in larger life systems that need nurturing and repair. We are all accountable and response-able.

4. Think globally and ecologically, act locally. Understand systems.

Human and cultural ways of making sense of the world cannot be separated from body, place and nature. Human intelligence is "part of a vast and complex system of reciprocal relations" (Martusewicz & Edmundson, 2004, p. 71). Life must be viewed as a balance of the well being of all—all our relations within the web of life.

Linking the local to the global, the private to the public—the human to the nonhuman world—requires us to stretch our thinking beyond the human world to inspire global ethical and ecological imaginations. Counter-centric strategies disrupt common patterns of oppression by affirming the continuity and kinship for each other and earth others. Dialogical and communicative forms of democratic practice are "open to the play of more than human forces and attentive to the ancestral voices of place and earth" (Plumwood, 2006, p. 229).

With greater focus on our capacity, strength, skill and imagination, and valuing the assets found in local communities, we are able to rebuild and re-create the local and global commons. Slow down. Consider our carbon footprints and the give-and-take of not taking more than we need. Eat and buy locally grown food; barter and consider non-monetary exchanges. Pay attention to who is hurting and how to prevent and alleviate future pain and suffering.

5. Focus on collaborative intelligence and participatory consciousness. Appreciate and celebrate our interconnectedness.

The relationship between individual responsibility and rights and collaborative intelligence is critical. Aim towards a focus on collaborative, democratic communities capable of welcoming others to co-create ever-expanding networks of solidarity and resistance, mutual care and responsibility.

We are wired to connect. Attempt to overcome narrow and exclusive perspectives that prevent the full participation of others. Embrace and encourage participatory consciousness, collaborative intelligence and democratic decision-making. Consider intergenerational webs of care that include the wisdom and concerns of our elders, youth, mothers and fathers.

Jeanette Armstrong (in Stone & Barlow, 2005) describes En'owkin decision-making as an effective example of community collaboration and practice by the Okanagan Indians on the Penticton Indian Reservation. The Okanagan people practice bioregional self-sufficient economies in which decisions are made that affect the whole family system also understood as *community*. To nurture participation and collaborative, collective decision-making among the Okanagan, "representative" voices of the elders, youth, mothers, and fathers are included.

Thinking of ourselves as family or kin, we are better able to develop trangenerational systems of decision-making that allow for a living process that interacts with the land. In this system the voices of the minority are considered the most important as they have the most to reveal about what is wrong within the community. Solving for

pattern, problems are perceived as symptoms of something larger that must be addressed by the whole community.

6. Reconsider "tools," methods and approaches.

To prioritize short- and long-term challenges and shift focus toward our just obligations—find ways to develop mutual accountability, trust and reciprocity. Focus more on abilities and strengths rather than on deficits, blaming and holding others accountable. Inclusive democratic practice invites difference, diversity and an openness to change.

Don't mourn, organize was a saying from past trade union movements. Accept the paradox of democracy and the agony required to create a better balance. Resistance and opposition are necessary, as are differentiation and diversity. Bonding, bridging and linking are generating forces that focus on imagination, creativity and the capacity of living networks to self-generate.

There are no quick fixes or tidy endings. Democracy is messy. Get engaged in the mess. Listen and respond to feedback loops, and let go of beliefs and strategies that are no longer effective for long-term survival. Re-imagining, re-creating and re-structuring systems require the participation of the whole community commons, continually learning to adapt to new challenges and emerging possibilities.

7. Understand how hierarchies are established and how not to re-produce them.

With a dependence on hierarchical, dogmatic and centrist ways of relating, we seem unable to develop the humility to practice self-reflexive perspectives. For those who choose to lead, I believe it is essential to recognize our own limitations of vision and openness for imaginative, intergenerational and intercultural systems of thought and action.

To replace hierarchical and mechanistic models of change with mutual, communicative and dialogical human/earth relations requires a major shift from polarizing dualisms and certainties to more open-ended, inclusive and democratic communities. Holding onto old determinist dogma and rigid belief systems to maintain control and dominance will not create the democratic and participatory engagement of widely diverse ideas and people required for reciprocity, pluralism and regeneration.

Epistemological thinking understands foundational questions with a great awareness of an array of qualities, complexities, paradoxes and nuances. By shifting the focus to understanding the relationships of systems instead of separate entities viewed hierarchically, we are better able to understand the wholesale changes required to radically shift priorities and ways of living together peacefully.

Consider the ways in which we perpetuate division, disintegration, disconnection and harm. Insist on self-critical and mutually responsible relationships continually striving for human/earth democracy. Accept the "ensemble of relations," we share with others—outside of dominant cultural stories of competition, divisions, borders and

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boundaries. Search for patterns and generative themes that co-create human/earth bonds and collective consciousness as well as the wisdom and sense to live in common.

8. Focus on dialogic possibilities for democratic decision-making.

Study conflict resolution and become more skilled in working across difference. Form bridging networks capable of finding commonalities and strengths, which when combined become a powerful force for the good. Reach out to others who look, think and act differently and find the common bonds and life-affirming forces that lay the ground for future collective work. Struggling for workable alternatives is a practice of living democracy.

Pessimism of the intellect is constructive if, while remaining skeptical, one avoids cynicism. Cynicism of the will toward future possibilities for fundamental change leads to weariness and defeatism. Optimism of the will bolsters confidence in one another, which leads to our ability to imagine otherwise and work collaboratively with a spirit of trust toward shared goals. Unrelenting social critique is insufficient without providing alternatives that actively involve, inspire and invigorate all community members to participate in our own renewal and survival.

Consider rights and responsibilities as one. Armstrong (2004) argued that being born with a connection is about being responsible to that connection as a member of a greater whole. Living democracy as a daily practice affirms diversity within a framework of individual rights and mutual community responsibility. Creating mutually agreed upon rules or guidelines in decision-making requires that we share in decisions that affect the

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whole commons. Democratic decision-making takes time, great patience, courage and humility, and relinquishing ringing certainties for the great unknown that is filled with possibility and promise.

9. Re-establish intimacy and eco-ethical care.

The best hope for our species lies in the ability to learn new patterns of attention toward each other and the biosphere. The patterns of continuity developed by systemic thinking about body, nature, place and community grow out of curiosity and respect and encourage awe and wonder.

A lack of love, appreciation and capacity for intimacy with the natural world leads to detachment, isolation and destructiveness. We become inwardly enriched, sustained and nurtured by our sensuous experience in nature and the emotional world. Ecological, collaborative and participatory consciousness that Castoriadis described as "giving thought wings" (Kenway & Fahey, 2009, p.21) allows for the imagination to re-create, renew and rebuild radically different human/earth relations.

To affirm our deepest values for love and belonging, sustenance, food, water and fresh air to breath, it is necessary to reincorporate the knowing body back into our consciousness and way of life. The shift required from the abstract and rational to the sensuous, emotional, empathic and participatory mind capable of feeling the sounds of the universe that calls for us to act.

Intimacy values direct experience over electronic or virtual connections. Get out into the public square, join with others to celebrate, study, dialogue and renew.

10. Energize, inspire and support public culture. Bring gladness (Khannna, 2010).

People learn best by feeling inspired, connected, deeply engaged and alive with anticipation and joy. Create open spaces for different expressions of cultural traditions, poetry, art, drama and other embodied experience. Create community dialogues, inter-cultural storytelling, conversation cafes, public singing and community gardens. When we are encouraged and inspired to be creative and deeply engaged in life, our engagement will lead to an ever-expanding work, spiraling out and including others in our wake. Focus on what brings us together in unshakable solidarity.

Focus on building community bonding and bridging networks that reinvigorate living democracy. With a continuous process of exchange, adaptation, connection and transformation through direct bodily engagement, new patterns of collaborative intelligence and participatory consciousness emerge with greater fluidity and self-correcting capacities.

Becoming lovingly relational (Bai, 2009, p. 145–146) is to practice the creative power of the web of life in all its preciousness and infinite possibilities. Building on the physical level of community encourages a rich eco-social system—the interplay of body, mind, soul and sole. Communities alive with poetry, music and deep feelings of love nourish and inspire a lovingly relational and deeply interconnected world.

Conclusion

> As I listen to my inner voices, the voices of others who attempt to speak for the Earth, and the world's cultural/political/economic I vacillate between paradoxes of loss and love, frustration and clarity, despair and hope, alienation and intimacy. ... The natural world is likewise experiencing extinction and creation, catastrophe voices arguing the plight of the Earth, and resurrection, disequilibrium and homeostasis. The acceptance and integration of dualities within the circle of life is part of the work of all …
> (Vickers, 2003, p. 9).

As I attempt to complete a process of writing about my deepest desire for a more just, sustainable and lovingly relational world, my heart is filled with joy and sadness, anxiety and celebration, despair and great hope. To frame a renewed sense of global purpose, we build on the work of others and sustain habits of the heart, soul and mind that will lead to greater repair, renewal and regeneration.

Globalization is an uneven process creating fragmented and uneven distribution of the critical resources for teaching and learning "and cultural criticism that are most vital for the formation of democratic research communities that could produce a global view of globalization" (Appadurai, 2000, p. 15). To explore the relationship between knowledge of globalization and the globalization of knowledge requires new forms of pedagogy with a vision of global collaboration—and collaborative teaching and learning communities about globalization. Appadurai suggests creating new forms of dialogue between academics, public intellectuals, activists and policy makers and urges a serious commitment to study globalization from below. Stepping back from abstractions that constitute our own professional practice to seriously consider the problems of the "global

everyday" requires the need for "counterglobalization stories and organization" (Appadurai, 2000, pp 17-18).

Rethinking what it means to be human in a world gone mad with violence and destruction requires that we begin to think as kin to one another and the biosphere that surrounds us. Laying the groundwork for renewing the commons requires a fundamental shift in worldview. Plotkin (2008) describes this process as "being summoned to become fully human. We must mature into people who are, first and foremost, citizens of the Earth and residents of the universe" (p.7).

Reinvigorating an active and engaged world citizenry requires participatory and collaborative consciousness rooted in generosity and eco-ethical care. Accepting the need for struggle is to accept that disequilibrium, paradox, and uncertainty are critical components in reversing current trends by creating anew. "To succeed requires ubiquity, a network of informants, a conspiracy of social imaginaries, groups that cultivate new knowledge, share it, seek information elsewhere, and provide it to agencies and citizens who need it" (Hawken, 2007, p. 178).

With a focus more resolutely on preserving what sustains the commons by building interconnected and enduring webs of care, we will be far more capable of creating the world we want that is inclusive of all of life. "The evolutionary process is *creative*, combining general patterns toward differentiation, inner spontaneity and comprehensive bonding" (Berry, 1999, p. 169).

Turning toward our moral, ethical, and sensual selves with a radical openness to

others and our natural world is the work that reconnects, heals, and courageously

imagines and labors toward the promise of earth democracy.

> One must say Yes to life, and embrace it wherever it is found — and it is found in
> terrible places ... For nothing is fixed, forever and forever, it is not fixed; the earth is
> always shifting, the light is always changing, the sea does not cease to grind down
> rock. Generations do not cease to be born, and we are responsible to them because
> we are the only witnesses they have. The sea rises, the light fails, lovers cling to each
> other, and children cling to us. The moment we cease to hold each other, the moment
> we break faith with one another, the sea engulfs us and the light goes out.
> James Baldwin (http://blog.gaiam.com/quotes/authors/james-baldwin)

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