AN EXPLORATION OF THE VIRTUES PROJECT:

ONTOLOGICAL, EDUCATIONAL AND CROSS-CULTURAL INQUIRIES INTO A MORAL EDUCATION PROGRAM WITHIN A MONGOLIAN SCHOOL SETTING

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cross-cultural, ethical orientations, Mongolia, moral education, narrative research, phenomenology, relational selves, The Virtues Project, virtues.
Abstract

The Virtues Project is a moral education program that has gained popularity amongst ordinary classroom teachers in different types of schools in diverse cultures. The originality of its approach is found in its five strategies, though it is often identified by its long list of virtues or by the origins of its founders. It is drawing attention from emergent research and education surveys, and has been remarked upon by moral education researchers and “virtues ethics” academics. This study contributes to research on The Virtues Project and to the larger field of moral education research by exploring its ethical, educational and cross-cultural coherence as a moral education approach in a school setting. This explorative study is underpinned by the phenomenological philosophical view put forward by Charles Taylor. His account assumes a broader account of morality beyond moral decision-making that encompasses human nature, the moral form of life, human moral engagement, and which has cross-cultural implications.

The ontological and ethical coherence of The Virtues Project is explored through the lens of Taylor’s account of the moral form of life and his philosophical anthropology of the self. The Virtues Project views the essence of human being as spiritual, living a physical life with the purpose of realising the virtues that exist in potential within, and seeing virtues as actualized within relational engagements. It has embedded in its foundations a fusion of past moral horizons, sourcing the understanding of virtues from various sacred texts and cultural traditions and drawing on psychotherapy as well as indigenous wisdom to understand moral engagement between human beings and communities.
A narrative research approach explores the educational and cross-cultural coherence of The Virtues Project. Teachers in a Mongolian school contributed narratives about their experience of implementing its five strategies and practicing virtues, whether named on its list or not. The *Listening Guide* analysis method enables the narrative inquirer to listen for, and analyse, the singular and collective voices of the teachers and the ethical features embedded in their stories. Two narrative retellings of the teachers’ experiences reveal the educational and cross-cultural dimensions of The Virtues Project. The first focuses on a crucial feature of moral education, namely the moral being and becoming, or flourishing, of selves, relationships and community. The second retelling is about the teachers’ experiences of becoming Mongolian in their modern day context as they engaged with The Virtues Project. Preceding the second is a retrieval of the moral dimensions of the cultural and historical embeddedness of Mongolian being.

Reflections on this exploration of The Virtues Project, it is hoped, may contribute to a wider discourse on and in moral education.
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Statement of Original Authorship

The work contained in this thesis has not been previously submitted to meet requirements for an award at this or any other higher education institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made.

Signature:

Date: 27 July 2015
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\(^1\) http://www.emmaedits.ca/
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Introduction

The Virtues Project is a moral education program originating in North America that was originally designed as a family program. It has been rising in popularity in schools in different cultural contexts and has become noticed by education systems in the English-speaking world. Its strategy-based approach is not common in how moral education programs are typically conceived, and though a list of virtues is typical for character education approaches, its long list of 52 virtues and acknowledgement of many more is not. There has been limited research conducted on this moral education approach, yet none have taken the philosophical and narrative focus of this thesis.

Previous research experience in Papua New Guinea\(^2\) highlighted the limitations of quantitative studies for exploring moral understandings in culturally diverse others as they engaged in moral education. Exploring the relationships between particular cultural-historical contexts, moral experiences, social groups and communities, and available moral sources, herein called an applied ethics exploration, has the potential to fulfil “the real promise of moral foundations” (Haste, 2013, p. 327). When Carol Gilligan (1982) listened to a different voice moral education research became more open to qualitative research, though this is still a limited area of inquiry (Lee &

\(^2\) My master’s degree study, Effecting Change of Moral Reasoning in Students Through Teacher-In-Service Training on Moral Education (Hancock, 2004).
Taylor, 2013, p. 412). Being open to the voice of participants, or narrative inquiry, is based on “a view of human experience in which humans, individually and socially, lead storied lives” (Connelly & Clandinin, 2012, p. 478). Gilligan’s different voice challenged the Kantian ethics upon which Lawrence Kohlberg had founded moral psychology, a “set of philosophical assumptions that has effectively limited theoretical growth and empirical innovation” in a field that has had a significant influence on moral education (Lapsley & Narvaez, 2005, p. 19).

This exploration of The Virtues Project is situated within the Applied Ethics Program at the Queensland University of Technology (QUT), which offers valuable insights about human engagement and the moral form of life that can broaden and enrich the purview of moral education. Engaging in, researching about, and reflecting upon the moral form of life presupposes the kind of beings we are, which, according to Taylor, are “inextricably intertwined themes” (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 3). Charles Taylor offers a different account of the moral form of life and human being, and his philosophical anthropology of the self goes beyond the atomistic, rational self to see us all as relational, interpretive selves. Taylor’s work also resonates with that of Margaret Urban Walker, Nel Noddings and Martha Nussbaum, who have continued to explore the new arena of feminist scholarship within which Gilligan’s discovery was situated. Their work supplements the Tayloren account underpinning this thesis.

Taylor does not view the increasing interaction between diverse peoples in modern societies as fundamentally problematical. The moral form of life involves

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3 The Applied Ethics Program was developed over nearly 20 years until 2010 when the School of Humanities and Social Science in which it was positioned was closed.

4 Charles Taylor, Emeritus Professor at McGill University, Montreal, Canada, is “an internationally celebrated public philosopher, one who strives to bridge the gap between philosophical theories and political action” http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/charles-taylor/.
strong evaluations of the “good” and inescapable moral frameworks for any person or group. Taylor argues this includes being interpretive and purposive, dialogically and relationally engaged, historically and culturally embedded, and materially embodied. His view embraces moral pluralism. There is a basic, core foundation to the diverse conceptions of the good life, but beyond that core lies a rich diversity of meaningful pursuits of the good, both culturally and individually. This fuller and richer account informs the ontological, educational and cross-cultural inquiry into The Virtues Project and its implementation in a Mongolian School setting.

The Purpose of This Thesis

The Virtues Project, like all other moral education programs, seeks to enhance moral engagement in a particular moral form of life. I argue that its ontological and ethical adequacy, its educational and cultural adaptability, and that of other moral education programs, can best be considered in the light of the moral form of life that it promotes and its understanding of the nature of moral being and becoming. There are three questions that shape this exploration of The Virtues Project:

1. How may there be a resonance between The Virtues Project and the moral form of life as articulated in the Taylorean account?

2. How feasible is it for The Virtues Project to be realized in a school context, given that it was originally a family program?

3. How might The Virtues Project resonate with a cultural context dissimilar to the North American cultural context of its development?
Research Significance

The significance of this research is twofold. Firstly, The Virtues Project is appraised for the integrity and coherence of its ontological and ethical assumptions, its educational viability to promote moral flourishing, and its cross-cultural capacity in a Mongolian setting. I argue that when the underpinning ethics and ontology of a moral education program reflects the way we sense our being and becoming, our lived reality, and the kinds of beings we experience we are, then it has the capacity to empower the moral flourishing of students and teachers.

Secondly, this exploration of The Virtues Project provides an opportunity to reflect on crucial issues in moral education about moral being and becoming. The issue of how we understand human selves and the good requires some sort of account. Taylor’s phenomenological philosophical account and its presupposed philosophical anthropology of the self, provide a robust foundation for researching the ontological and ethical questions that lie at the heart of moral education. I propose that a critical area of research in moral education involves the ontological assumptions about the self, which are intertwined with the ethical assumptions about the good life, and the embedded context of the history and culture of both moral education programs and the teachers and students who engage with them.

Research Scope

This study of The Virtues Project is an exploration of some of its ethical and ontological dimensions. The foundation of this exploration is a phenomenological philosophical account of the moral form of life and its presupposed philosophical
anthropological understandings of the nature of the self. The coherence of the moral framework of The Virtues Project is studied from the perspective of three aspects: the ethical and ontological, the educational and the cross-cultural. The material resources made available for educators and those trained as facilitators of its workshops for teachers is the basis for studying the first. Its ethical and ontological coherence is explored in examining its congruence with the Taylorean account of the moral form of life. A case study of the implementation of The Virtues Project in a school setting is the basis for examining the second aspect. The educational coherence of this moral education program that adapted its family focus to a school focus is explored in a narrative analysis and retelling of the experience of secondary school teachers who implemented it. Only one school took part in the narrative case study, a public school centrally located in Ulaanbaatar, the capital of Mongolia. This gave rise to the exploration of a third aspect of The Virtues Project, the cross-cultural coherence, at least from the experience of teachers from one school in Mongolia. In addressing the third aspect, this study seeks to explore the appropriateness of The Virtues Project to meet the immediate challenges of moral identity faced by Mongolians as their country transitions from its socialist past to a liberal democratic future.

Mongolia is a country sandwiched geographically and historically between Russia and China and yet its culture and language is distinctly different. Mongolians have long had a nomadic form of life, and their language is Turkic-Altaic based. It is part of ancient Inner Asia situated in the cold elevated eastern area of the Central Eurasian continental steppes. Nomadic life is highly mobile because of the semi-arid steppe climate, and its economy revolves around the care and use of herding animals. For several millennia the nomadic peoples of this region have lived in round felt
tents, called *ger*, which have changed little in design and organization over time. Though the majority of today’s Mongolians are city-dwellers, still a third, nearly a million people, live a nomadic life. The vastness of Mongolia can be appreciated when travelling through it, which intrepid adventure tourists do each summer. The rocky valley peaks dividing the rolling green grassy steppes offer far stretching vistas with little evidence of human occupation. For nearly a century Mongolia was in isolation behind the Iron Curtain and only opened up to the international community a quarter of a century ago. Yet its history reveals a more intimate connection with world events than its remote geographical position might suggest. Mongolia’s famous ancestor, Chinggis Khaan, built the largest contiguous empire in recorded memory, an empire that facilitated speedy cross-cultural connections during the European Renaissance and potentially was the ultimate destination of Christopher Columbus when he stumbled upon America. It is connected in surprising ways to significant world events and yet so vastly different in its narrative understandings of the meaning and purpose of life and way of living within it.

The Mongolian school case study provides a unique cultural setting to explore the cross-cultural adaptability of The Virtues Project. Anthropologically its historical and cultural context is little known or understood in the West, and its engagement with Western paradigms in education has been short. The obscure setting of the narrative case study challenges English-speaking understandings of moral education. It requires an ethnographic approach to the case study and an articulation of Mongolian nomadic cultural and cosmological understandings. The broad Tayloren moral account, the largely unresearched Virtues Project, and the highly contrastive context of the case study school challenge an English-speaking cultural

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5 For a timeline of historical eras that have shaped Mongolian society see Appendix A.
understanding of moral education. Exploring these frontiers in moral education has potential to enrich and expand our insights into this area of human endeavour.

**Definitions of Research Terms**

Moral education is fundamentally about human being and becoming, understood in this thesis as moral flourishing. Different moral education approaches, such as values education and character education, presuppose particular understandings about the nature of human being on which are built particular accounts of the moral form of life. Moral education seeks to enhance the moral flourishing, moral form of life, and moral engagement of individuals and communities. Ontology is defined in the *Greenwood Dictionary of Education* as “the study of being and existence, an attempt to accurately and systematically explain what there is and what there is not” (Collins III & O'Brien, 2011, p. 329). The *Encyclopedia of Case Study Research* defines ontology as “the study of the true nature of existence,” further commenting that “[o]ntology problematizes taken-for-granted assumptions about things seen and unseen” (Bakker, 2010, n.235). In this thesis, the use of the terms ontology and ontological are a specific application of the more general meaning. The ontological dimensions I refer to in this thesis are the nature and condition of human being and human becoming, the account of the moral form of life, and the nature of moral engagement in human societies. Morality is the approach to enhancing moral flourishing, in other words human being and becoming, and constraining that which causes harm and disempowers moral flourishing.

Moral philosophy has traditionally been shaped by conceptions of what it is right to *do*, at least in the English-speaking tradition. The moral philosophy
underpinning this thesis conceptualises who it is good to be. The field of phenomenological philosophy seeks to understand a fuller picture of the phenomenon of moral life as it occurs in modern human societies. It is presupposed by a philosophical anthropology of the self, an ongoing project to understand the nature of the human condition, particularly as it appears in the complexity of the modern world. The moral and spiritual dimension of being human are the arena of human experience in which meaning and purpose is given to our lives.

**Thesis Outline**

The thesis is in two parts. The first, Part A, comprises of two chapters that prefigure this study. Chapter Two describes The Virtues Project and presents a literature review drawn from mainstream moral education research. Chapter Three presents the conceptual framework that serves as the appraisive context: the philosophical anthropology of the self and the phenomenological philosophical perspective of the moral form of life proposed by Charles Taylor.

The second, Part B, interprets the coherence of three dimensions of The Virtues Project, namely the ontological, educational and cross-cultural, to appraise the extent to which it resonates with the Tayloreal framework of the phenomenological philosophical account of the moral form of life. Chapter Four is an exploration of the tacit assumptions underlying The Virtues Project, those to do with the moral form of life and assumed features of human being and becoming. It seeks to determine whether the Virtues Project’s ontological assumptions are consistent and coherent with the broader conception of morality as articulated in the Tayloreal framework. (Refer to Appendix B for an overview of the research design.)
An Exploration of The Virtues Project

In order to more fully explore the research themes of the educational and cross-cultural coherence of The Virtues Project, a narrative case study in a Mongolian school was carried out. The narrative research methodology of the case study is laid out in Chapter Five. Chapter Six examines the educational coherence of the transposition of The Virtues Project from a family-based focus to a school setting. It seeks to examine whether the critical concerns of moral education, namely the moral form of life and moral engagement are enhanced, and whether the particular conceptualisation of human nature inherent in The Virtues Project resonates for the Mongolian teachers.

Chapter Seven is an articulation of the cultural and historical embeddedness of Mongolians who are today facing deep moral identity challenges as their moral horizons become crowded with an unfamiliar moral plurality introduced by the international social forces that they have welcomed into their midst. The exploration of the cross-cultural coherence of The Virtues Project in Chapter Eight required an understanding of the cultural embeddedness of the Mongolian teachers, whose cultural and historical heritage provides them with a very different life experience from that of people in the English-speaking world.

With the rapid spread of modernization, the global social forces shaping modern societies have been progressively impacting on indigenous communities that have their own deep cultural roots, long histories, and diverse conceptions of what it means to be human and how to live a good life. Chapter Eight explores whether The Virtues Project, a North American moral education approach, resonates and is cross-culturally coherent in Mongolia, which has a vastly different history and culture to the origins of the program. It appraises whether the Virtues Project’s interpretations of morality as perceived in Taylor’s phenomenological philosophical perspective are
adequately defensible in the context of Mongolian conceptions of being, becoming and the moral form of life. It seeks to explore whether or not The Virtues Project enhances the experience of moral flourishing for Mongolians in the context of modern society.

Chapter Nine takes the opportunity to reflect on the outcomes of this research in the context of contributing to moral education research and practice.

Summary

The purpose of this thesis is to argue that the adequacy of The Virtues Project, as with other moral education programs, to deliver a balanced and meaningful educational experience within a multiplicity of cultural and moral horizons might be explored in the light of Taylor’s phenomenological philosophical account of the moral form of life and his presupposed philosophical anthropology of the self. Three questions shape this thesis: What are The Virtues Project’s tacit assumptions about the moral form of life and therefore about human being and becoming, as viewed from the perspective of the Taylorean account? How does this play out in a school? And, to what extent is it able to resonate in a cultural context very different from the context of its conception and development?

An interesting feature of The Virtues Project was that it was not developed through university research or as a result of school practice, but began as a program for parents, which then spread into schools. It has come to the attention of mainstream moral education, and the different responses to it point towards one of the concerns at the core of moral education: What is our account of the moral form of life? We may well need an adequate, or fuller, account of the moral form of life. To
achieve this we may well need to re-examine our conceptions of the nature of human being and becoming that lie at the heart of the moral form of life. Whatever our account of the moral form of life is, it lies at the core of how we go about educating children to become moral selves. The recovery and re-examination of our conceptions of the moral form of life and moral being and the consequent sharing of research and practice in a global education community raise further questions. Our shared humanity and the recognition of cultural differences also emerge as crucial topics to explore in a global educational engagement.
Part A: The Virtues Project and Taylor’s Account of the Moral Form of Life
Chapter 2: Becoming Acquainted With The Virtues Project

Introduction

The Virtues Project was initially created as a moral education approach for parents to use at home with their children. Its flexible approach was quickly adapted into other environments, most particularly in schools. The Virtues Project spread internationally soon after its inception, becoming successfully applied in both schools and other human engagements. Its cross-cultural flexibility makes it an interesting moral education study. Diverse cultures and religious groups find the Virtues Project strategies and reminders of the virtues helpful in achieving their own aims of contributing to the flourishing of their communities and schools. The Virtues Project has also enriched the secular space in many government schools in the English-speaking world without transgressing the bounds of personal beliefs and value systems.

The Virtues Project has come into the purview of academic researchers and writers in English-speaking academic texts. The majority of the research projects are academic dissertations, mostly at master’s degree level. Surveys by education departments and school principals have also begun to take note of the practice of The Virtues Project in schools and have anecdotally reported positive experiences. Some education academics have discussed The Virtues Project for its apparent religious
dimensions. Other virtue ethics academics have discussed the cross-cultural applicability of the virtues.

This chapter introduces The Virtues Project, what is written about it in moral education academic literature, and briefly describes the milieu into which it has begun to make a debut. Before embarking further, a brief explanation of the author’s lived experience with The Virtues Project since the inception of this research study is shared.

**Engaging With The Virtues Project**

While waiting for confirmation of doctoral candidature with the Applied Ethics Program at the Queensland University of Technology in Brisbane, Australia, I took the opportunity to attend a mentorship conference on The Virtues Project held in the Brisbane region in July of 2006. It was there that I realised that The Virtues Project had five strategies that were integral to its application. In January and February of 2007, soon after settling into the United States, I attended an introductory workshop called *The Virtues Project Parenting Class*, conducted by the Rose Counselling Center in Silver Spring, Maryland. In early April 2007, I attended *The Virtues Project Facilitator Program: Three Day Intensive* in Chemainus, British Columbia, Canada, conducted by Kate Marsh, a Virtues Project master facilitator, and became a Virtues Project facilitator. In June 2007, I was recognised by the founders as a Virtues Project master facilitator.

In December 2007, I conducted a five-day intensive training program for 26 Papua New Guinean schoolteachers that combined the two-day introduction and three-day facilitator workshops. My Papua New Guinean counterpart was already a Virtues Project facilitator, and, on the basis of her contributions to organising and
presenting during the intensive workshop, she became a Virtues Project master facilitator. At the end of March 2008, some weeks after my doctoral confirmation seminar, I attended the Virtues Project 20th Anniversary Mentorship in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada. I made my first presentation about my doctoral research and its focus on The Virtues Project at the Asia Pacific Network for Moral Education conference in Beijing in April 2008. Serendipity played a hand in my husband being posted to Ulaanbaatar for work, and we moved to Mongolia in July 2008. I began my research project case study in a Mongolian school in October 2008.

A Description of The Virtues Project

The Virtues Project is a moral education approach applicable for people of all ages, in all walks of life, occupied with all kinds of activities. There are two major components to The Virtues Project: the virtues and their descriptions, and the five strategies for remembering and working with the virtues. These are introduced in this section.

There are two main publications from The Virtues Project that focus on its implementation in schools. One is a book, The Virtues Project—Simple Ways to Create a Culture of Character: Educator’s Guide, often called the Educator’s Guide (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000). The other is the Virtues Cards: Reminders of the Gifts of Character, also referred to as the Educator’s Virtues Cards. Another essential publication, The Virtues Project Leaders' Manual, is used by Virtues Project facilitators to conduct training workshops (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2005). Sometimes another publication is referenced by teachers implementing The Virtues Project in their school, The Family Virtues Guide: Simple Ways to Bring Out the Best in Our
An Exploration of The Virtues Project

*Children and Ourselves*, which is often referred to as the *Family Guide* (L. Kavelin-Popov et al., 1997). This book has an accompanying set of cards—*Virtues Cards: Reminders of the Gifts Within*—often called the *Family Virtues Cards* (Virtues Project International, 1997). These publications, and personal experience as a Virtues Project facilitator and master facilitator, have guided the description that follows.

**The 52 Virtues**

The Virtues Project’s philosophy is “that by focusing on the virtues—the best qualities within our children—we can encourage them to be at their best” (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. xv). The most distinctive feature, on first coming into contact with The Virtues Project as an educator and parent, is its listing of the virtues. Kavelin-Popov refers to all virtues as “the oldest ideas in the world,” and “simple, timeless practices.” (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, pp. xviii-xix). The lists of virtues used vary in The Virtues Project publications depending on their purpose and use (Virtues Project International, 2006). The Virtues Project International Association defines virtues as follows:

Virtues are the essence of the human spirit and the content of our character.

In most of our books there are 52 virtues, some of which are unique to each book. (Virtues Project International Association, n.d.-d)

Kavelin-Popov explains that the lists used are drawn from an initial list of 350 virtues compiled in the early days of The Virtues Project (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2005, pp. Workshops-5). (See Table 2.1 below)
Table 2.1: The Educator’s Guide List of 52 Virtues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assertiveness</th>
<th>Diligence</th>
<th>Integrity</th>
<th>Reliability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Caring</td>
<td>Enthusiasm</td>
<td>Joyfulness</td>
<td>Respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleanliness</td>
<td>Excellence</td>
<td>Justice</td>
<td>Responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>Flexibility</td>
<td>Kindness</td>
<td>Self-discipline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compassion</td>
<td>Forgiveness</td>
<td>Love</td>
<td>Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence</td>
<td>Friendliness</td>
<td>Loyalty</td>
<td>Tact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consideration</td>
<td>Generosity</td>
<td>Moderation</td>
<td>Thankfulness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperation</td>
<td>Gentleness</td>
<td>Modesty</td>
<td>Tolerance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courage</td>
<td>Helpfulness</td>
<td>Orderliness</td>
<td>Trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courtesy</td>
<td>Honesty</td>
<td>Patience</td>
<td>Trustworthiness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td>Honour</td>
<td>Peacefulness</td>
<td>Truthfulness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detachment</td>
<td>Humility</td>
<td>Perseverance</td>
<td>Understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determination</td>
<td>Idealism</td>
<td>Purposefulness</td>
<td>Unity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 134)

There is a set of virtues cards that accompany the Educator’s Guide (Virtues Project International, 2002b). Each card contains an account of the virtue in language that is easily accessible for young students, with examples of what the virtue might look like in practice. Each is illustrated by colourful, culturally and geographically diverse photographs, and includes an affirming statement valuing the virtue from a first person perspective. The card format makes the virtues information versatile for classroom use. Two examples are provided in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1: Respect and Unity from the Educators Virtues eCards (Virtues Project International, 2002a)

The secular focus of the Educator’s Guide and its accompanying Educator’s Virtues Cards is the distinctive difference from other publications. The Educator’s
Guide broadens the literature drawn on for inspiring quotations from the world’s sacred texts to include thinkers and prominent people, both current and from history. The Educator’s Guide and accompanying cards are available in a number of languages other than English. The original reason for the selection of 52 virtues, which first appeared in the Family Guide, was a pragmatic one of having a virtue for each week of the year for family use (L. Kavelin-Popov et al., 1997, p. xvi). The number of virtues has remained at 52, perhaps because this number has become a distinguishing feature. This number of cards seems a manageable amount when handling them in a school setting, unlike the set of 100 Virtues Reflection Cards (Virtues Project International, 2006).

The Five Strategies

The Virtues Project is not, however, defined by its long list of virtues. The five strategies help teachers and students to think about who they are, to develop a climate of character, and to build safe and caring communities (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. xix; Linda Kavelin-Popov, 2007, p. 6). These are explained and contextualised for school use in the Educator’s Guide, providing numerous practical examples with stories of the application of the strategies and transformation experiences in school environments in different countries and cultures. These five strategies, briefly, are

1. Speaking the language of the virtues
2. Recognizing teachable moments
3. Setting clear boundaries
4. Honouring the spirit
5. Offering the art of spiritual companioning. (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. xxiv)
The main strategy, speaking the language of the virtues, is the recognition of virtues in action in everyday conversations between people of whatever age and in whatever context. Virtues language appears in the form of acknowledgements of virtues observed in practice; as guides to direct focus on virtues that may be needed in impending action, or as corrections of past actions with negative outcomes. An example of acknowledging a virtue is, “It was kind of you to show our new student where to sit. I’m sure it made him feel welcome,” (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 8). Virtues language is used in situations to guide or correctly engage “moral and spiritual awareness” to awaken the child’s conscience and “the moral purpose of the change that is called for” (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 9). Before a particular moral response is expected by the teacher, an anticipatory “virtues as guidance” statement replaces a possible “Don’t…” statement, such as, “Please look at me and listen respectfully” (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 9). After misbehaviour, explains Kavelin-Popov, it is justice to focus on the virtue and not shame the student. For example, a corrective response to bullying could be, “Jim, you need to be peaceful. How would a friend act? What kind of a person do you really want to be with others?” (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 9). Judgmental statements of good or bad are not considered by Kavelin-Popov to be conducive to creating a “climate of meaning” as they do not expose the core of meaningful action, which is the intention for action, that is reflective of one or more virtues (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 10). Corrective language can also be “sandwiched” between a virtues acknowledgement and a virtues thank you. An example is given of a school report appreciating a student’s kindness towards new students, her challenges in needing to learn to set clear boundaries with more aggressive behaviour from other students, and thankfulness for her helpfulness to both students and teachers and her application of purposefulness to
stay on track in tasks set (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 12). It is also suggested that virtues language can be used for staff appraisals (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 13). The virtues language is understood as the “main ingredient in creating a culture of character” (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 3) and underpins the remaining four strategies.

Teachable moments is a strategy that acknowledges the richness of learning moral concepts through virtues practice situated in everyday engagements and ordinary relational contexts. This concept, a new educational idea of the 1990s (Woods & Jeffrey, 1996), is understood in The Virtues Project as the opportunity for mastering a practice and understanding the meaning of virtues in everyday experiences (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 29). Kavelin-Popov states, “it is best if most of their lessons on virtues occur within the context of daily learning and living” (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 29). Everyday situations throw up opportunities for virtues language, which can be targeted towards the specific virtues the child is ready to master. Classroom lessons also provide further opportunities to increase the understanding of virtues and their possible applications by using virtues-oriented questions, as they are called, on the subject being taught (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 29). Using open-ended, rather than closed, questions can help students to integrate the meaning of the teachable moment into their own understandings (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 39). Further, positive encouragement is explained as a focus on virtues development through highlighting the practice of “growth virtues” to support improvement (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 31), and sharing with parents examples of their child “caught in the act of practicing one of the virtues” (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 39). Punitive approaches often associated with traditional education methods are regarded by Kavelin-Popov to produce “fear of authority, people-pleasing,
rebellion, free-floating guilt,” and the belief that “something is right as long as you don’t get caught” (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 35). A “virtues-oriented educator” helps students develop their conscience, “the regulator of character,” through the use of virtues language in “teachable moments” (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 35).

The virtues-based boundaries strategy interprets the issues in human engagement through the lens of virtues to identify the strengths and weaknesses of each person and the virtues needed for transformative solutions. The intention behind the setting of clear boundaries is to “create safe havens, where students feel free to learn and teachers feel free to teach,” within the scope of practicing virtues (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 57). A virtues-based boundary is about restitution, not retribution, and seeing authority as educative, “in service of learning,” and counter-productive if it is about dominance or “people-pleasing” (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 58). Authority as mentorship for learning would, it is claimed, enable “children to develop their own inner authority, a sense of personal responsibility and accountability,” empowering children to “make conscious moral choices” (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 58). The focus in a disciplinary situation, Kavelin-Popov recommends, is to first listen for, rather than assume, the intentions behind the action, and then to redirect student awareness to “meaning and mastery” of the virtues that were needed to deal with the particular situation (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 65). Boundaries can be set spontaneously, such as in emergencies. Kavelin-Popov shares an example of children rushing to see a moose and calf on the school grounds, noting that her demonstrated action and clear instruction—“Stop at the edge of the grass. Stay safe.”—was more effective in keeping enthusiastic children in check than, “Don’t get too close!” (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 58). Virtues-based boundaries can also be set as “ground rules” for a whole school, for which it is
recommended that they be moderate, specific, positive, based on virtues, consistent, clearly communicated, with clear expectations, accompanied by specific and relevant consequences that are educative, restorative and understood by students, and that they are non-negotiable if set as bottom-line rules (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, pp. 68-75).

The strategy of honouring the spirit is the recognition that purpose and meaning in life for oneself and one’s school is a deep moral concern. The use of the term “spiritual” is seen in the educational setting as pertaining to “a sense of meaning and purpose, beliefs and values, mastery of virtues in our character” (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 83). Virtues, understood in The Virtues Project as the basic elements of spirituality, are a common language for the spiritual dimension (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 83). Pluralist societies, Kavelin-Popov observes, have diverse religious beliefs, or non-religious ones, and that values tend to be culture-specific, yet religions and cultures all universally value virtues (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 83). Creating a safe, caring, and respectful learning environment, she suggests, is to inspire empowerment through seeing the potential for virtues capacity in children, creating a shared vision statement with children, adult modelling of the virtues children are expected to practice, together with children sharing stories, which are the keepers of meaning, focusing on virtues in the arts, and including virtues in ceremonies that mark special times (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, pp. 83-94).

The companioning strategy, earlier called “the art of spiritual companioning” (L. Kavelin-Popov et al., 1997, p. 45), sets out to find the moral core present within upsetting tensions and predicaments in a safe relational space. Offering companioning was described by a young Canadian First Nations mother attending one of the courses of The Virtues Project as “walk along” (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000,
Kavelin-Popov contends that “walking along” with another person is to offer clarifying questions that help the other to “find their own wisdom” (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 109). Sometimes referred to as “spiritual companionship,” this strategy seeks to go beyond problem-solving to enter into the meaning, purpose and virtues of a situation (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 109). It is an art and a skill that can be used to support children to make their own moral choices rather than the teacher giving their own wisdom to solve the child’s problem (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 110). Seven steps of the spiritual companionship process are put forward to accompany someone through their grief or moral dilemma: opening the door through compassionate attention; offering receptive silence; asking questions that will reveal more of the predicament; focusing on sensory cues; asking virtues reflection questions; asking closure and integration questions; and giving a virtues acknowledgement (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, pp. 113-115). Spiritual companionship can be used in one-on-one situations or group situations that can range from small playtime quarrels to coping after a catastrophic event. Group events can be conducted as a “sharing circle” with “clear and strict boundaries about listening and talking, trust and confidentiality, and appreciation of each other” (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 112). Companioning can also be used in strategic planning (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 129).

**Four Principles in The Virtues Project**

The Virtues Project identifies four principles underpinning its approach. The first principle is that children need respectful, empowering and consistent guidance, not unguided freedom, from an authority in service of children’s learning in order to learn self-authority (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2005, pp. Workshops-32). The second
principle is that each child has the potential to exhibit all the virtues to a certain extent through choice and effort on their part, based on information about how to be, so that they can learn to make healthy choices (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2005, pp. Workshops-32). The third principle is that feeling the power of making their own choices raises self-awareness in children, increasing the ability to self-define and the continuation of healthy choice-making (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2005, pp. Workshops-33). The fourth principle is that children act spiritually, and develop their inner authority and self-esteem, each time they choose to do something of the highest order (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2005, pp. Workshops-33).

**The Origins of The Virtues Project**

This research focuses on application of The Virtues Project in a school setting, but the founders of The Virtues Project did not originally embark on a moral education approach for schools. The story of its history and spread provides the backdrop to its particular design.

**The Founders of The Virtues Project**

The three founders, Linda Kavelin-Popov, the principal author, her husband, Dan Popov, and her brother, John Kavelin, lived much of their working life in America. In the late 1980s, when character education was undergoing a revival in America, Kavelin-Popov, Popov and Kavelin moved from America to an island in British Columbia, Canada. As a psychotherapist, a psychologist and philosopher, and an “imagineer,” respectively, the three engaged in conversations in 1991, sharing their concerns about the rising violence in children and youth that they had
encountered throughout their career experiences in America. Their understandings about child development and pathologies turned their conversational focus to the sense of meaninglessness and loss of purpose that underlay much of the violence they had observed in young Americans during most of their working lives (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2005, pp. Promotion-2, Handout-1). Their desire to commit to playing their part in changing this situation motivated them to create The Virtues Project, through which they could realise their aims.

The three founders are members of the Bahá’í Faith. Their cultural, work and religious embeddedness all contributed to their particular ways of seeing and acting in the world and were significant in their viewing of societal challenges and the approach to affecting change that they came to develop. The principal author, Kavelin-Popov, was a young American mother during the protest years of the 1960s and 1970s. Her career was focused on psychotherapy, at first working with young children and their families, and later developing suicide and violence prevention programs for use in American cities, and working as a community developer (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2005, pp. Promotion-2). Popov had a varied career that included clinical paediatric psychology and, later, scholarly study of the world’s sacred traditions. Kavelin was a long time imagineer and then director of numerous Disney “imagineering” projects in America and beyond (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2005, pp. Promotion-2). None of them were trained as teachers in schools, though their combined careers had a focus on children and their families, and their work experiences each brought unique perspectives to the creation of a moral education approach.

In the decade after Martin Luther King’s famous “I have a dream” speech in 1963, Kavelin-Popov’s values of “respect, tolerance and unity” were deeply relevant
to her as a mother in terms of eradicating racial prejudice. She encouraged and supported her two sons to have cross-cultural friendships. Though it is a widespread trend in America today for children to have diverse cultures represented in their friendships, this was not so common in the racially divided America of that time, yet her eldest son had such a friendship even before he went to school. Her response to racist remarks was to tell him about the justice of “seeing with your own eyes and thinking with your own mind” (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. xiii). Kavelin-Popov also noticed her son was not coping well with the new “open classroom” experiment at school, one of the many fads that progressive educators and schools eagerly embraced with little appreciation of the many other understandings and methods that needed changing in these new situations. In this case, there seemed to be no boundaries in place for children, and teachers easily experienced frustration with particularly demanding children in the noise and chaos (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. xiii). She offered the school principal her volunteer assistance as a psychotherapist and ended up working with five very challenged young children. She focused on the virtues of respect, patience and self-discipline with the children, establishing caring relationships with them and helping them to understand respectful boundaries and appropriate ways of getting attention. The children began to make progress in their reading. At the end of the term, the five children were noticeably transformed and presented their new found understanding and way of behaving to their class, teaching them the simple actions and ways of seeing they had learned. The success of this simple virtues development approach inspired the school to develop their own program, the ABC: Aiding Behavioural Change (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. xv). Kavelin-Popov cites this parenting experience in 1975, during her eldest son’s first
year of school, as the “seed” and inspiration for her contribution to the development of The Virtues Project (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. xv).

The three founders based The Virtues Project on the understanding that “virtues are at the heart of meaning in every culture and belief system, from indigenous oral traditions to the world’s sacred traditions” (The Virtues Project International Association, n.d.-d). Popov’s philosophical research was a significant contribution to this conceptualisation. After the commitment the three made to create The Virtues Project, Popov compiled a list of 350 virtues, from which the first selection of 52 virtues was made (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2005, pp. Workshops-5). The compilation process continued and a list of 620 virtues is currently available (The Virtues Project International Association, n.d.-a). Combining these perspectives with Kavelin’s experience in creative design and their desire to “be of direct service to the world” (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2005, pp. Promotion-2) led them to write and self-publish their first book in 1991, *The Virtues Guide: A Handbook for Parents Teaching Virtues*, in British Columbia, Canada (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2005, pp. Introduction-19). It contained the elements of the five strategies, with 52 virtues for parents and children to practice together (The Virtues Project International Association, n.d.-d).

**Growth of The Virtues Project**

An early training experience with a small group of First Nations people in northern British Columbia provides one example of a pathway of growth and development. Members of the Tsawataineuk people came across The Virtues Project soon after its first publication was launched and approached the founders asking to be taught about this approach to the virtues (The Virtues Project International Association, n.d.-d, p. 2). As one staff member from the Little Wolf Head Start Pre-
School remembers, Kavelin-Popov and Popov came in the early 1990s to their community to share the program and, as a result, the elders translated the 52 virtues cards into Kwakwala, their own language (BC First Nations Head Start On-Reserve Program, 2005, Spring, pp. 2-3). It is interesting to note that later in the Educator’s Guide Kavelin-Popov refers to the “Four Medicines” of the First Nations people of North America (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 4), and uses this framework to interpret the language of the virtues strategy as a way of seeing, hearing, speaking and acting.

The Virtues Project spread by word of mouth to 20 countries in less than two months (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2005, pp. Introduction-19). Kavelin-Popov and Popov travelled extensively to different countries presenting workshops and working with individuals, families, schools, governments and communities of numerous cultures making presentations about and offering training workshops in The Virtues Project, giving rise to numerous awards and a television series in Canada (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2005, pp. Promotion-2). In 1997, Kavelin-Popov revised the original book and Penguin published The Family Virtues Guide: Simple Ways to Bring Out the Best in Our Children and Ourselves (L. Kavelin-Popov et al., 1997). The 52 selected virtues were presented for families to use, their contents drawn from “various sacred traditions as the best source of our collective knowledge of virtues,” and presented as “helpful and accessible to all people, religious or not” (L. Kavelin-Popov et al., 1997, p. xii). The five strategies were offered as “simple methods for paying attention to the spiritual and moral development of a child day-to-day” with the purpose of “bringing out the best in every child, and in every member of the family” (L. Kavelin-Popov et al., 1997, p. xii). An accompanying 52 virtues card pack was also produced. These included references from various sacred texts, which many families appreciated using at home.
Teachers who came across The Virtues Project as parents were quick to want to adopt the strategies and the cards in the schools where they were working. Kavelin-Popov worked with a number of teachers as she trained them, and in 2000 she authored *The Virtues Project—Simple Ways to Create a Culture of Character: Educator's Guide* (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000). The North American resistance to religious references in school-focused texts was accommodated. More importantly, many examples of the application of The Virtues Project strategies accommodated the training needs of teachers. A set of educator’s virtues cards was produced in 2002. In keeping with the secular needs of North American schools, these cards were prepared without references to religious sacred texts.

*Training and Facilitators in The Virtues Project*

An important component for the spread of The Virtues Project is the training workshops. The first workshops were developed for parents and, as the Tsawataineuk experience demonstrated, were easily adapted to community development through parent training. This flexibility extended to the workplace and to schools. In 1992, the first facilitators trained by Kavelin-Popov and Popov began presenting Virtues Project workshops (Acres, Auffray, Lydle Smith, & Kavelin Popov, 2007, p. 4). By 1998, a “Leaders’ Manual” was produced by Virtues Project International for facilitators trained in a three-day workshop and was continuously updated until 2005 (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2005). The manual compiled resources for workshops of different kinds, developed through the experiences of “pioneer facilitators” and the founders (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2005, pp. Prologue-3). As a result of many people implementing the Virtues Project strategies in their families, communities, workplaces and schools, the founders decided to appoint master facilitators “to
acknowledge their contributions” (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2005, pp. Promotion-1). In 2007, three master facilitators published a detailed two-day introductory workshop outline containing the key elements identified by eight experienced master facilitators from Canada, the United States and New Zealand (Acres et al., 2007, pp. 6-7). Guidelines for a three-day facilitator training workshop, with three sample programs, activities and handouts, were also published by the same three master facilitators in collaboration with Kavelin-Popov (Acres et al., 2007).

Further to the workshops, local facilitators and master facilitators are encouraged to come together and hold quarterly “Virtues Connections” to share experiences and innovations (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2005, pp. Section-5). Virtues Project International was established in 2001 to bring cohesion and identity to the growing multicultural community using The Virtues Project in various situations (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2005, pp. Promotion-1). Publications increased and were made available for sale on the website, which also included work from others who became involved in The Virtues Project. Virtues Connections and national networks such as the New Zealand Virtues Trust and Virtues Project Korea (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2005, pp. Resources-2) hold regional or international conferences called “Mentorships” (The Virtues Project International Association, n.d.-e). A United Nations report on civil society’s involvement in the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World (2001-2010) includes The Virtues Project China, The Virtues Project Fiji, The Virtues Project Germany, The Virtues Project Netherlands and The Virtues Project Canada in the list of contributing organizations (UN International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World 2001-2010, 2010).
A Literature Review of The Virtues Project

The Impact of The Virtues Project on Students and Teachers

A number of studies have focused on The Virtues Project as a moral education approach in schools. An Australian school’s Character and Leadership Audit found the use of the Virtues Project’s educator virtues card pack in one of its classes increased student awareness about distinguishing between right and wrong in media messages (Alexander & Benson, 2005, pp. 9,12). It also noted that when parents expressed disagreement with the moral ideas discussed in class an open communication approach with parents settled such concerns (Alexander & Benson, 2005, pp. 9,13). A master’s degree study combined weekly discussions on virtues, using the Virtues Project virtues’ descriptions, with music education and found social responsibility developed as a result (Della Vedova, 2007, p. 80). A recent master’s degree study in the United States reviewing peace education approaches that included the Virtues Project virtues language strategy concluded that students paid more attention to how the action of virtues was carried out rather than on cognitive learning about virtues (Lockwood, 2014, p. 24). Two master’s degree studies, one in the United States and the other in New Zealand, found that The Virtues Project improved study behaviour and social skills (Branson, 2004; Patton, 2008). The New Zealand master’s degree was a pilot study for an Australian doctoral study researching the correlation of child engagement characteristics with teacher communication behaviours, using the Virtues Project virtues language strategy as a research tool (Patton, 2010).
and all were considered inappropriate to transform “personal and social thinking away from superficial personality towards character; from things to thoughts; from reaction to reflection; from insularity to broadened horizons; and from individualism to community and biosphere,” exploring and supporting instead the promise of bioethics as a stand-alone subject as a more effective approach to values education (Stevens, 2013, p. 363).

Several studies have specifically focused on The Virtues Project as an effective educational approach to increase moral capacity and the quality of social interaction. The earliest, a Canadian master’s degree study focused on education for young mothers that examined a spiritual framework approach, which included the Virtues Project teachable moments strategy, suggested social workers needed to explore their clients’ spirituality (Rocke, 1998). Two later doctoral studies, one in Japan and the other in New Zealand, also focused on expectant and new mothers’ education in which The Virtues Project was used for the moral dimension. Psychological stability was reportedly achieved in the former (Urayama, Jinchuan, & Oki, 2009) and the other found the life turning point of motherhood for teenagers to be an opportunity for positive identity formation if there was adequate support for the mother and child (Hindin-Miller, 2012, p. 8). At about the same time, a Belgian study found The Virtues Project supported and gave meaning and depth to Life Space Crisis Interventions (de Moor, 2011, p. 57). A recent Norwegian organisational leadership master’s degree study on the workplace-training arm of The Virtues Project found that in order to achieve a common goal, leadership would benefit by the practice of virtues (Hessel, 2013). The study took the Bahá’í view of human nature as having the virtues in potential, and human purpose being to develop these virtues and contribute
to societal welfare, and determined that this conception was similar to The Virtues Project (Hessel, 2013).

Some education studies have focused on teachers. One, a New Zealand master’s degree study, investigated the effects of regular collegial reflective practice using the Virtues Project strategies on teachers’ thinking, beliefs and practice (Greenslade, 2007). Soon thereafter, a master’s study in the United States focused on the justification of delivering teacher training in the virtues language strategy through an e-learning platform (Feldman, 2009). A master’s study in the United Kingdom found that The Virtues Project was a reflective and flexible approach that reinforced virtues across the curriculum and influenced teaching styles (Clifford, 2013, p. 279).

**The Virtues Project in School Reviews**

School applications of The Virtues Project have come to the notice of government education departments. Alberta Education in Canada listed The Virtues Project as a resource for character and citizenship education, encouraging teachers and administrators “to use the ‘language of the virtues’ and to encourage students to do the same” (Alberta Education, 2005, p. 170). Alberta Education later conducted a survey of schools using its suggested effective behaviour supports and noted significant reductions in school discipline referrals, suspensions and expulsions (Mackenzie, 2008, p. 3). The report claimed many Canadian and American schools were using The Virtues Project and encouraged teachers and administrators to use the virtues language approach and have their school community focus on a virtue each month (Mackenzie, 2008, p. 67). Education departments in New Zealand and Australia have conducted reviews of values education in their respective countries. In New Zealand, 39 schools reported that they had trained staff who were using The
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Virtues Project in the classroom. They reported a positive difference in the students, staff, parents and sometimes in the wider community (Keown, Parker, & Tiakiwai, 2005, p. 86). However, Snook, a values education academic in New Zealand, expressed concern for “insidious influences into schools by means of business partnerships” stating that the contemporary values education programs available, of which The Virtues Project was one, neglected to “analyse the characteristics of the students who are to undergo them” (Snook, 2005, p. 6). In Australia, a review of 69 schools reported positive outcomes for the three schools integrating The Virtues Project into their school culture: one a state school, one an indigenous-focused college, and the other a Catholic Education school (Curriculum Corporation Department of Education, 2003, pp. 96, 108, 143). The staff of one school in a small survey of six schools in New Zealand selected the Virtues Project strategies from amongst several tools and strategies they had reviewed and considered that it met the newly legislated key competency standards for teaching and learning (Boyd & Watson, 2006, p. 88). A New Zealand Children’s Commissioner inquiry conducted a literature review on various child safety practices in schools, including research conducted on The Virtues Project in the country. It concluded that students’ social relationships are best supported at the classroom level and with a systemic school focus on being a caring community (Carroll-Lind, 2009, p. 137).

The Virtues Project has also been referenced in character and moral education reviews by prominent moral education researchers and authors in the United States. Lickona noted the use of the virtues language strategy by several educators and suggested that “the language of virtues can create a culture of character” (Lickona, 2004, pp. 152-153). Berkowitz and Bier cited The Virtues Project as one of the more prominent programs relying on virtues words and observed that no scientifically
rigorous research had been conducted on a character education initiative centring on a set of character words and that anecdotal experience showed that a list of words was insufficient to produce significant character development in students (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005, p. 22).

**School Principals Report on The Virtues Project**

School principals have reported positive responses to The Virtues Project in schools. School administrators in Western Australia gave a conference presentation of their school’s experience with The Virtues Project, claiming teachers were using more positive language in the classroom, and students were reflecting more on their own behaviour and doing this in terms of virtues (Pendlebury & Benson, 2004, p. 174). A New Zealand school principal completed a “sabbatical report” on her investigation of The Virtues Project and its use in New Zealand schools concluding that it was an effective model but that the “program would not work in any school if the professional leaders did not believe and value its benefits” (Dixon, 2005, p. 9). A New Zealand Principals’ Federation review found extensive use of The Virtues Project in six of the sample of 16 schools throughout the country (Thomson, 2006). A doctoral dissertation that focused on educator perceptions within a United States education department-funded qualitative pilot study on the implementation of character education in six schools found that all three of the approaches reviewed, which included The Virtues Project, were effective because of their flexibility about community-specific values (Burton, 2008, p. 230). Benade, a New Zealand director of educational research, referred to the Catholic Schools Office review of one of its schools using The Virtues Project, quoting their findings that the project “linked seamlessly with the school’s Mission, Vision, Values and Goals,” and that the school
community, which had a “positive, nurturing, inclusive culture,” clearly articulated and deeply understood these values in its discourse (Benade, 2012, p. 70). Crawford and Rossiter, Australian Catholic Education and Values academics, concede that The Virtues Project is a good example of spiritual moral questions being integrated into curricula, but express concern that the identification of the underlying belief system that influences values is missing (Crawford & Rossiter, 2006, p. 310).

**Critiquing Religious Connections in The Virtues Project**

Despite school reports of positive experiences with The Virtues Project in the 2003 Australian Values Education Study, the report questioned the Virtues Project’s claim that the list of virtues was distilled from the world’s religions (Curriculum Corporation Department of Education, 2003, p. 202), citing an Australian education officer’s (Gore, 1998) warning that “the project could be considered as an attempt to introduce the fundamental principles of a particular religious persuasion into schools” (Curriculum Corporation Department of Education, 2003, p. 202). Hill, a prominent values education academic in Australia and one of the review consultants (Curriculum Corporation Department of Education, 2003, p. v), noted the effect of the Australian Federal Values Education project in education was to view the school population as a moral community (Hill, 2012, p. 11). He expressed concern that teachers seeking moral education package deals from the internet may “inadvertently become promoters of partisan ideologies,” citing The Virtues Project as one such “popular default package” which he claimed had a worldview belonging to the Bahá’í Faith (Hill, 2012, p. 11). He acknowledged The Virtues Project, and other programs like it, may have many good suggestions “for the effective transmission
and clarification of values,” but advised to “use them as resources, not prescriptions which override professional discretion” (Hill, 2012, p. 11).

Moral education researchers have commented on some of the concerns raised about religious thought and religious institutions becoming involved in state education and have been more positive about the Virtues Project founders’ connection with the Bahá’í Faith. Berkowitz, a prominent American moral education researcher and developer, and other colleagues identified The Virtues Project as an example of a religious character education program and contend an “ethics-based-on-religious-beliefs perspective is compatible with secular character education as long as it does not involve indoctrination or proselytizing” (Howard, Berkowitz, & Schussler, 2004, p. 203). Arweck and Nesbitt, researchers in religious studies and education in the United Kingdom, argue that when “counselling colleagues on the application of education criteria” there needs to be consideration made as to the “usefulness or otherwise of imparting information about the sponsors’ religious and philosophical stance,” citing The Virtues Project along with others (Arweck & Nesbitt, 2004a, p. 145). They refer to The Virtues Project as being “connected with the Bahá’ís” (Arweck & Nesbitt, 2004a, p. 145). In a later publication, they name the founders of The Virtues Project and identify them as Bahá’ís who drew on the Bahá’í teachings and concepts for their project, rather than The Virtues Project being “connected” to a religious organisation or community (Arweck & Nesbitt, 2007, p. 313). Arweck and Nesbitt do not diminish or dismiss the value of the contributions religious ideas or organisations can make to moral and spiritual education in state schools in the United Kingdom (Arweck & Nesbitt, 2004a, pp. 145-146). They suggest that the attraction of such programs “may lie in [their] aim to convey universally acceptable values” in multicultural and multi-faith school communities.
(Arweck & Nesbitt, 2004a, p. 145; 2004b, p. 225). Lovat and Clement, prominent Australian values education researchers, consider that there are benefits to student wellbeing from contributions of non-school-based religious groups to values education development (Lovat & Clement, 2008, p. 41). They argue that The Virtues Project and others “have played a crucial role in supporting many developments in values education across the world, in religious and, increasingly, public schools” (Lovat & Clement, 2008, p. 44).

**Examining the Conceptual Underpinnings of The Virtues Project**

There are a number of studies that have commented on the conceptual underpinnings of The Virtues Project. The earliest is a Canadian master’s degree study, in which a conceptual model for secular moral education was developed, that claims Noddings’ care ethics provides a broad enough foundation to give Kavelin-Popov’s strategy of virtues language validity (Jaltema, 2002, p. 73). A New Zealand study exploring spiritual giftedness is sceptical of the value of moral education programs, such as The Virtues Project, to develop relational consciousness, defined as a higher-order concept unifying emotional and spiritual giftedness (Fraser, 2004). Annas, a British philosopher at the University of Arizona, judges The Virtues Project to be “worthy of reflection” because of its success in conflict resolution in schools, but notes that it was “strikingly” under-theorized and treated the virtues at an elemental level (Annas, 2004, p. 61). Handal, an Australian education academic, conducted a review on the philosophy of Bahá’í education noting the conception of personal transformation as also being “a powerful factor in achieving social transformation” referencing the interpretation of this concept in The Virtues Project in the way it raised “awareness on world citizenship” as “a preparation for achieving
unity in diversity in a world free from religious, racial or national prejudices” (Handal, 2010, p. 55). Vasalou, a visiting research fellow at King’s College in London, considered virtue as a mastery of language, citing The Virtues Project strategy of the virtues language as a case in point. She critiqued the examples of virtues language in the Family Virtues Guide as “bookish” examples of language use, going on to suggest that learning any language may at first seem extraordinary “until one’s practice has given it a home and more natural idiom free from bookishness” (Vasalou, 2012, p. 85).

The cross-cultural relevance of virtues, a claim The Virtues Project makes, has also been debated in the literature, some of which refers to The Virtues Project. De Souza, a religious education academic at the Australian Catholic University, cites Kavelin-Popov’s assertion that virtues are the “innate good qualities of the human person” and as such are “universally valued by all cultures” (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. xix). She argues for virtues rather than values in the pluralistic context of Australian society, which, she contends, does not need culture- and class-specific values (de Souza, 2004, p. 4). Snook, a researcher in New Zealand values education, disagrees with the Virtues Project’s claim that everyone shares virtues, countering with “there must be a place for the disparity of views which mark a pluralist society,” appearing to equate virtues with values (Snook, 2005, p. 4). Jacobson, an American academic in philosophy, equates virtues with values in a similar way to Snook in his comments on the translations of the virtues in The Virtues Project into different languages as exaggerating “the similarity between cultures by effacing vast normative differences with a dubious claim of synonymy” (Jacobson, 2005, p. 396). Hursthouse, a virtue ethicist in New Zealand, puts forward a case for the cross-cultural phenomenon of the virtues, citing, as an empirical demonstration, the
translation of the Virtues Project list of 52 virtues in numerous languages and its successful application in schools across the world (Hursthouse, 2006, p. 107). Hursthouse sees parallels between Aristotle’s virtue ethics—the psychic nature of the self, the goal of life as eudemonia, and virtues as the framework for moral engagement—with The Virtues Project. She compares these with the founders’ religious interpretations of the spiritual nature of the self, genuine happiness as the goal of life, and the virtues as elemental to moral engagement (Hursthouse, 2008, p. 438).

Summary

The Virtues Project considers virtues to be elemental to the diverse human ways of valuing and believing found around the world. The first strategy, the language of the virtues, is foundational to the remaining four and holds the key to understanding the scope and effectiveness of The Virtues Project. The Virtues Project approach, first aimed at families and later adapted to schools, is primarily a strategy-based approach. The Virtues Project is not a moral education program in the traditional sense because its learning focus lies in the application and practice of the five strategies, which are not confined to the curriculum, lessons or the classroom. The overarching strategy of the virtues language points to a more dialogical way of relating between people. All the strategies can be applied school wide and beyond, and are applicable to other relationships beyond those between teacher and student. The Virtues Project originated from outside the mainstream of moral education practice and made its debut into school environments in the late 1990s, gaining legitimacy as more teachers began adopting it.
A number of references to the Virtues Project focus on its list of virtues. However, some also note the strategies and particularly make mention of the virtues language strategy. School experiences generally report a positive experience with The Virtues Project, though not all necessarily implement its strategies. The academic literature on The Virtues Project is not always well informed about its practice. Some education academics express concern that there is an underlying religious set of beliefs in The Virtues Project. Other education academics argue that religious ideas in programs like The Virtues Project may have valuable contributions to make for moral education in general and can potentially be compatible with secular moral education. Some virtue ethics academics doubt the universal valuing of the list of virtues presented by The Virtues Project, although, according to another, the fact that the Virtues Project virtues names have been translated into other languages has demonstrated the cross-cultural phenomenon of virtues. The virtues language was identified by a Canadian education department as a useful component of The Virtues Project and was suggested as being able to create a culture of character by a prominent American academic. Academic dialogue on The Virtues Project is progressively taking shape, particularly in educational and philosophical fields, though Annas’ observation in 2004 that The Virtues Project is “strikingly” under-theorized appears still to be the case. Limited research has been conducted on its implementation in schools, whether quantitative or qualitative. There is scope, then, for a substantial study of The Virtues Project in a cross-cultural context to examine educators’ interpretations of it and their implementation experiences with its strategies in their classrooms and schools.

The conceptual framework on which this thesis is based is outlined in the next chapter. It draws on Charles Taylor’s philosophical anthropology of the self and his
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phenomenological philosophical account of the moral form of life, pays attention to moral engagement, and has some cross-cultural considerations. This framework is used to explore the integrity and coherence of The Virtues Project.
Chapter 3: Moral Selves and the Moral Form of Life: 

A Tayloorean Approach

Introduction

Philosophy needs a more generous notion of what it is to be human than what has . . . been captured by the liberal ideal. (Pring, 2005, p. 60)

The inadequacy of the conception of the self as a detached and rational being that has been a prominent undercurrent in English-speaking moral education research and practice is critical to understanding the problematic in moral education. How the self came to be seen primarily as a detached, rational agent is a long historical story in itself, but it is now deeply embedded in modern conceptions of what kind of life is worth living and therefore the way moral education is perceived and implemented. However, recent developments in the field have opened up a questioning stance to this deeply embedded assumption. As Pring remarks, the liberal ideal the modern world has become enamoured with has an inadequate notion of what it is to be human. Philosophy, he suggests, requires a broader conceptualising of ontology (Pring, 2005, p. 60). Nussbaum has critiqued the liberal ideal for its inherent problematic, asking how a decent society, in the context of the liberal ideal, can “do more for stability and motivation . . . without becoming illiberal and dictatorial” (Nussbaum, 2013, p. 5).

Charles Taylor’s phenomenological philosophical account of moral values and how they link to notions of the “good” explores a broader conception of morality.
His aims in articulating such an account resonate with that of Nussbaum’s. His account presupposes a philosophical anthropology of the self, one that might adequately meet the need for a fuller ontology that Pring raised (2005, p. 60). Isaacs expresses it as

an account of the good self requires an account of the nature of the Good that resonates with the nature of human selves. For Taylor, ethics and ontology are intertwined since the account one offers of the Good Life ought to be one that plausibly reflects the kinds of beings that humans are, and ought be one that resonates with human persons’ own sense of their being and becoming and their lived reality. (Isaacs, 2009b, p. 1)

This chapter lays out Taylor’s account of the nature of human selves and the moral form of life, an account that accommodates the phenomenon of the ever-increasing variety of ways of living a worthy life that are both encountered, as diverse people come together, and created, as modern life enables ways of life unimaginable in years gone by.

The importance of this undercurrent for moral education cannot be overstated. How we conceive of our human nature, accommodate the many ways of living that are worth living, and express a worthy life in human engagement, have tremendous consequences for the way we approach moral education in schools. Taylor’s interpretation of the human experience of being a self is more profoundly complex than the conception of the self as a detached, rational being that found expression in the modernity project. The Tayloren framework offers a richer and fuller understanding of the nature of the human self and the moral form of life that allows for diverse ways of living a worthy life. The key features of this framework are
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outlined below. Also discussed below is the nature of moral engagement and some cross-cultural considerations based on Taylor’s expanded account of human nature.

Questions of an Ontological Kind

The ways in which people understand what it is to be a person changes over time and across cultures, and this is linked with the different ways of being a person. (Abbey, 2000, p. 55)

Taylor researched the cultural and philosophical movements in European and English-speaking history to explore “the background picture of our spiritual nature and predicament which lies behind the moral and spiritual intuitions of our contemporaries” (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 3). He retrieves the evolution of conceptualizing and valuing the purely rational form of life, a moral form of life based on “what it is right to do,” and demonstrates that this is not the only conception of moral life that has been, or is, desirable or defensible (Isaacs, 2010, p. 123). Taylor has a more complex and richer account of the good we seek to become. Taylor contests the minimalist moral view of “what it is right to do” through a historicist methodology to posit a broader ontological understanding based on “what [who] it is good to be and what is worthy of love” (Abbey, 2000, p. 199). To be a person, according to Taylor, is to grapple with moral concerns. Personhood is inseparable from the good that is sought and the good the person wants to become.

6 The work of Peter Isaacs, co-founder of the Applied Ethics Program, and Ruth Abbey’s book, Charles Taylor (Abbey, 2000), have been particularly helpful in this interpretation and understanding of Taylor’s work. Writings found in the field of feminist scholarship have been supplemental. These academic works are significant to the research approach within the Applied Ethics Program at Queensland University of Technology.

7 The use of “what” in “what it is good to be” is interpreted by this author as “who it is good to be”. “Who it is good to be” is used in preference to accentuate the subjective choice that characterizes human selfhood rather than allude to the kind of objectivity inferred by the detached rational view.
(C. Taylor, 1988, p. 298). His approach is about the way the good presents itself to us as an invitation, as a possibility, to engage richly in life. These goods are sourced from and have their foundations in a particular culture and history (C. Taylor, 1988).

Taylor’s work in *Sources of the Self* is an historical retrieval of the good we in the Western English-speaking cultures are embedded in. The good, as we have come to interpret it, is tied to our responses to the dimensions and particular challenges moral being has for us. Taylor also conducts a philosophical anthropology to recover a fuller account of the ontological dimensions of personhood, which runs through the body of his work (Abbey, 2000, pp. 56-57). This philosophical anthropology identifies perennial features of the self, or moral being, irrespective of changes in the ways in which conceptions of self and the desired form of life are expressed or understood (Abbey, 2000, p. 56). The self is an actor and a reflective thinker seeking to make and find meaning in the world. The self is embodied as a being in the world and is also embedded in a natural world, a social world, language and time, and a moral horizon or framework of values (Isaacs, 2010, p. 125). This embodiment and embeddeness of the self and selves is inextricably linked to desires for richer engagement and being in the world, those aspirations towards the good and the good life. Taylor’s account of the moral form of life re-conceptualizes the ontological to reflect his phenomenological view of how we experience the moral in our living and practical reality.

**The Self**

We are selves only in that certain issues matter for us. What I am as a self, my identity, is essentially defined by the way things have significance for
me, and the issue of my identity is worked out . . . a self or person . . . is not like an object in the usually understood sense … we don’t have selves in the way we have hearts and livers . . . we are only selves insofar as we move in a certain space of questions, as we seek and find an orientation to the good. (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 34)

Taylor fundamentally understands the self as seeking to find an orientation within a space of moral and spiritual questions about “who it is good to be and what is worthy of love”. Through his philosophical anthropology, Taylor examines the features of the self to put forward a fuller account of what it means to be human than what we have inherited from the modernity project (Abbey, 2000, p. 56; Isaacs, 2009b, p. 2). From a Tayloren perspective of the historical context of today’s European culture, is added the ontological dimensions of interpretation and self-interpretation, purposes, language, dialogical engagements, relational embeddedness, material embodiment and vulnerability. These are each described below.

**Interpretation and Self-Interpretation**

Being a self is existing in a space of issues, to do with how one ought to be, or how one measures up against what is good, what is right, what is really worth doing. It is being able to find one’s standpoint in this space, being able to occupy, to be a perspective in it. (C. Taylor, 1988, p. 298)

The human experience is more than a physical experience with the world. We have thoughts, ideas and feelings about what we experience and engage with in the world, which we sense as “inner” reality distinct from “outer,” physical, or material reality (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 111). We use this inner interpretive capacity to make sense of the outer in ways that have meaning and value for us. Further, we make our
inner reality the focus of our interpretations, making us self-interpretive as well. This interpretive and self-interpretive capacity enables us to have our own sense of selfhood.

A self resembles a text in that there is a meaning to be understood and in the way that new interpretations can supersede earlier ones. But when it comes to selfhood, the self is not just the text to be interpreted but also the interpreter of that text. (Abbey, 2000, pp. 59-60)

Self-interpretations are a crucial feature of our identity, and even if they are “erroneous, the way in which that person understands himself is still a crucial feature of his identity” (Abbey, 2000, p. 59). We are constantly engaged in interpreting and reinterpreting, thereby transforming our identity as we reflect and evaluate our outer and inner experiences (Isaacs, 2009b, p. 2). “The self’s interpretations can never be fully explicit” (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 34) because they are an ongoing project of making sense of who I am and who I am becoming, and are deeply connected with what I have done, what I am doing, and what I might do. As we refine, revise or reject our self-interpretations, we come to transform the way we view and talk about our experiences, emotions, ideas, beliefs and values, and therefore change “the self that is both the interpreter and the interpreted” (Abbey, 2000, p. 59).

**Being and Becoming**

. . . persons have the power to create their own be-ing; persons do not just exist, but they enjoy a unique capacity to continuously be-come. This unique capacity to shape one’s own personal existence or life reflects our natures as self-interpretive and purposive beings . . . (Isaacs, 2009b, p. 7)
Our moral understandings change within a context of time and give us a sense of development and progress, reflecting our biology (Abbey, 2000, p. 61). As interpretive beings, we seek to make sense of who we are, and therefore we also seek to make sense of who we are becoming.

My sense of myself is of a being who is growing and becoming . . . It is also that as a being who grows and becomes I can only know myself through the history of my maturations and regressions, overcomings and defeats. My self-understanding necessarily has temporal depth and incorporates narrative . . . We want our lives to have meaning, or weight, or substance, or to grow towards some fullness . . . (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 50)

The time-relatedness of our self-understandings comes because we are beings that have a past, live in a present, and have aspirations, or fears, for a possible future. We are intimately concerned with who we are, our be-ing, and with the possibilities of our be-coming. We have, explains Isaacs, “an endless capacity to create and re-create” ourselves because we “are thinkers, doers, and creators” particularly of our own selves (Isaacs, 2007, p. 4). Human knowing, whether it is about the physical world or the space of moral and spiritual questions, is, for us, embodied in the physical experience of time and space (Isaacs, 2009b, p. 3).

The sense a person has as “a being who is growing and becoming” (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 50) is further explained by Noddings when she points out that “selves are not born,” (Noddings, 2002b, p. 98). Noddings sees the same goal for education and moral life in general as growth:

The goal is not the “true self” as an autonomy to be discovered and maintained, not a unified self without Whitman-like capaciousness, not yet a merely consistent or coherent self, since that could mean stagnation.
Noddings’s goal for education as for moral life would seem to be growth, as articulated in Dewey’s Experience and education (1938), but going beyond Dewey, a growth toward not only the ethical ideal of the habitually socially intelligent response, but toward a response that enhances the caring self. (Bergman, 2004, p. 154)

Becoming, from a Tayloren and a care ethics perspective, is a never-ending process. Moral flourishing is always a possibility.

**Purposes**

Our interpretations give rise to purposes that have shaped our being and give direction to our becoming. Purposes give us a sense of being and becoming, of flourishing or not progressing, because they provide us with criteria for evaluating past, present and intended future actions (Isaacs, 2009b, p. 2). They play a role in structuring our self-interpretations and identity construction, and in guiding our reflections and reinterpretations (Abbey, 2000, p. 65). Taylor claims that because we understand ourselves as having purposes and that our actions are guided by them, it means that we believe that someone has a certain intention to act in a certain way to bring about a particular outcome (Abbey, 2000, p. 64).

In order to understand a person, it is necessary to have a sense of the purposes that direct her action. Such purposes inform and perhaps even structure the individual’s self-interpretations. (Abbey, 2000, p. 65)

Purposes can belong to one person, such as pursuing a career or vocation, or of expanding one’s understanding and practice of self-discipline for example. Purposes can also be shared in a collaborative way, such as in the birth of a nation or as seen in the struggles against prejudice and hatred (Nussbaum, 2013, p. 385).
Language

Language makes our interpretations and self-interpretations, and therefore purposes and becoming, possible. It provides us with a creative power to remember and imagine the meaningfulness of life and of others for us. It enables us to be selves.

Language . . . opens up new ways of interpreting the world, of interpreting other possible ways of being in the world and of new ways of being committed to, and being fulfilled in, the world. Language (learning and education) opens up new possibilities of creative being and becoming.

(Isaacs, 2009b, p. 2)

The moral space in which we come to know the self becomes identifiable and meaningful to us through language. Taylor argues that we use certain terms, including virtue terms, to make the best sense of our own thinking, feeling and acting, terms that we cannot do without and that resist being split into “factual” or “evaluative” components of meaning (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 57).

Now “dignity,” or “courage,” or “brutality” may be indispensible terms for me, in that I cannot do without them in assessing possible courses of actions, or in judging the people or situations around me, or in determining how I really feel about some person’s actions or way of being. (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 57)

We use language with other language users; we share language. The language spoken by a person “can never be just my language, it is always our language” (C. Taylor, 1995, p. 99). The words, phrases and stories of a language hold specific meanings for the “us” connected in community.
There is no way we could be inducted into personhood except by being initiated into a language. We first learn our languages of moral and spiritual discernment by being brought into an ongoing conversation by those who bring us up. The meanings that the key words first had for me are the meanings they have for us, that is, for me and my conversation partners together. (C. Taylor, 1989, pp. 35, emphasis in original)

Further, Nussbaum maintains that “language does not hold a monopoly on cognitive sophistication,” and that “a non-linguist form of representation (auditory or visual) can contain as rich an array of possibilities as can language” (Nussbaum, 2013, p. 402). Taylor agrees with this view and suggests that the resources for self-interpretation come from the whole gamut of symbolic forms that a culture contains, such as art, dance, music, literature, philosophy, religion, ritual and so on… (Abbey, 2000, p. 67)

Language, in its wider sense, is the medium for the voice of the self, and through conversation it is the medium for the voice of many others, individual or collective, historical or contemporary. Language is always a conversation, whether it is a conversation within our selves, or a conversation with others, living or past, because in the dialogue between people meaning is conveyed. Accumulated and shared meaning adds an educative capacity to language that plays a significant role in our moral becoming (Isaacs, 2009b, p. 2). At the same time as being educated into cultural ways of knowing through language, we also draw on the creativity and expressiveness of language to voice our particular interpretations, making it possible for us to innovate new ways of knowing (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 35).

We continue our interpretations and reinterpretations with, and through, language creating new stories about how our lives hold meaning and purpose for us,
new ways of expressing ourselves. As life grows more complex, we add new words to accommodate our expanding knowledge and understanding. In effect, language is a vehicle by which cultural meanings are created and conveyed. It is also a vehicle through which cultural meanings are negotiated between people. The intersubjectivity facilitated by dialogue gives us, who are in conversation, the potential for richer and more complex understanding and meaning created and negotiated together, and the possibility of flourishing human relationships (Isaacs, 2009b, p. 2). This gives language the aura of being at the creative frontier of culture and civilization.

Language is a creative and expressive good for us. Though it can mediate harm, and perhaps too often does, it is its power to mediate our being and becoming as individuals in relationship, as relationships in community, and as communities in cross-cultural connectivity with one another that is most important to our moral flourishing.

**Narrative**

The sense we have of our selves as growing and becoming and therefore as a being with a history and with a future, means we are beings with a “life story” that gives our lives a “meaningful unity” (C. Taylor, 1989, pp. 50-51). Taylor proposes that it is through narrative terms that we make sense of our lives, treating each experience and engagement as an unfolding story (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 47). Selfhood uses narrative to structure self-interpretations (Abbey, 2000, p. 38), which gives Taylor cause to state “that we grasp our lives in a narrative” in the moral space which holds questions, “which only a coherent narrative can answer” (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 47). The self is not an object in a physical sense, the self is a voice, a narrative voice
about being and becoming (Isaacs, 2007, p. 6). Noddings illustrates the point by describing the self as a kind of “script by which the organism directs and interprets its encounters” (Noddings, 2002b, p. 98). Through voice we recognize that which is morally good for us, the recovery of a value from the distant past, the realization of goods already present, the dilemma between conflicting goods, and about disorientation and bewilderment in our moral landscape.

We can only answer this kind of question by seeing how they fit into our surrounding life, that is, what part they play in a narrative of this life. We have to move forward and back to make a real assessment. (C. Taylor, 1989, pp. 50-51)

Cultures, nations, ethnic groups, religious traditions, and more, all develop narratives that clothe the individual’s understanding with the layers of embeddedness and access to older and far-reaching ontological conclusions (Abbey, 2000, p. 38). Though our narrative lives may be interwoven with the narratives of others around us, or those gone before, and although we may sometimes have a sense of renewal or complete change of self, still we have a sense that we have some control over the direction of narrative movement we feel.

**Dialogical Engagement**

Taylor views the construction of identity through self-interpretations and purposes as situated in the ongoing language exchange with others. We engage dialogically with others, who are present or distant in time and space, when we talk and listen, read and write, observe and participate. Language is “never a private matter; it always reaches beyond the self to posit in another conversation” (Abbey, 2000, p. 69). To be a voice is to be in dialogue with other voices, partnering and
collaborating with others to create new modes of shared being and becoming in the world (Isaacs, 2007, p. 6). My self cannot be a detached self because I am always already engaged in what must be a dialogical space of moral and spiritual issues because of the centrality of language in my self-interpretations and intentions. It is in this dialogical moral space that we share, merge, enrich, question, and reject ideas, values, beliefs, and self-understandings with others, real or imagined. Dialogue, then, is at the core of identity, essential for the formation of the self and central to our human experience.

My discovering my own identity doesn’t mean that I work it out in isolation, but that I negotiate it through dialogue, partly overt, partly internal, with others . . . My own identity crucially depends on my dialogical relations with others. (C. Taylor, 1995, p. 231)

We are intertwined with others from cradle to grave, having many conversations with many others. The dialogic community, or communities, which we engage with on our life’s journey are the milieu in which we come to understand and shape our moral selves, our moral orientation and direction, and our moral responses. It is, for us, a dialogic journey of navigation through the space of questions about “who it is good to be and what is worthy of love” with others and communities of others. Identity is formed, sustained and altered within the “webs of interlocution,” as Taylor describes it, of dialogical communities.

This is the sense in which one cannot be a self on one’s own. I am a self only in relation to certain interlocutors: in one way in relation to those conversation partners who were essential to my achieving self-definition; in another in relation to those who are now crucial to my continuing grasp of languages of self-understanding—and, of course, these classes may overlap.
A self exists only within what I call “webs of interlocution”. (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 36)

The language of our moral and spiritual intuitions within these webs of interlocution becomes the “common space” we share with others and the grounds we use when we diverge from the commonly held view (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 35). The nature of interlocution within these webs will range between harmonious and dissonant as individuals respond in different ways to different moral questions and situations (Abbey, 2000, p. 68). As our dialogical engagement is, so too will be the quality and direction of our flourishing. The richer and broader our conversations, the more tested and contested our interpretations, the stronger will become our own moral conceptions and identity.

The conversations in which the dialogical self engages are usually with significant others and are historically and culturally embedded. But this is not always the case, and, in modern life, conversations between people of diverse cultures happen ever more frequently. These conversations, according to Taylor, are possible because of a kind of “fusion of horizons” that becomes the foundation for mutual understanding and the exploration of differences. As Abbey explains,

it is helpful to think of the dialogical aspect of the self as embedded in the linguistic one, which in turn is part of the individual’s wider cultural background. But just because these conversations with significant others occur against the wider linguistic and cultural backdrop, it does not mean that one’s interlocutors must be members of the same culture. It is possible to conduct these formative conversations with people from other cultures, but in order for the conversation to take place, there must have been some “fusion of horizons”, some point of contact uniting people from different
cultures so they can go on to understand one another and even to recognize
the differences between them. (Abbey, 2000, p. 68)

**Relational Embeddedness**

Relationships provide us with more than just our everyday moral encounters. Relational connections between human beings are integral to dialogical engagement. They form the anchor points of the interlocutory webs of human society, providing for us the “tacit background” for how we see the moral landscape (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 36). In conversing with others, moral and spiritual interpretations are tried out, making social relationships important components in grasping the moral and spiritual landscape in which selves are immersed and constituted.

Do I know what I am saying? Do I really grasp what I’m talking about? And this challenge I can only meet by confronting my thought and language with the thought and reactions of others. (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 37)

Our original natal relational webs of family and neighbourhood, culture, ethnicity and religious groups define for us a sense of the starting point of our identity and our moral heritage. They provide us with the initial ways we are seen by others, contributing to our first senses of dignity and self-esteem and thereby shaping the way we see our selves and relate to others (Abbey, 2000, p. 59). This kind of starting point is one that is always already ongoing. It is a rich and highly complex network of relationships with established ways of being in which we find a beginning to our own voice in dialogue with others, giving story to how the world makes sense to us, adding our own narrative to the narratives of others, and becoming an historical voice ourselves (Isaacs, 2007, p. 10). Our relational embeddedness includes, therefore, the historical and cultural relationships of people we have never
met but who have contributed their experiences and interpretations, purposes and becoming, to the tacit background of our own lives. As relational beings we are embedded in our own history and in shared histories with others. The moral goods that flow from the rich and complex relational webs of both the present and the past are often implicit and, though understood and even loved, are not necessarily clearly articulated.

We derive emotional fulfilment from our relational webs, as demonstrated by the sense of trauma, alienation, loneliness and despair we can experience when our social world is disrupted (Isaacs, 2009b, p. 4). As we mature we have opportunities to form relationships outside of these original webs of connection, potentially shifting the centrality of our connectedness with others. We may “step beyond the limits of thought and vision of contemporaries,” yet without our initial and subsequent dialogical engagements we cannot recognize, orient in, or navigate any moral and spiritual space of issues. We would be, as Taylor points out, “lost in inner confusion” (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 37). This highlights the autonomous nature of our moral experience, that our self-interpretations and our purposes will be our own, which Taylor sees differently situated than the modern western conception of individual freedom, autonomy and independence (Abbey, 2000, pp. 68-69). For Taylor, autonomy is only achievable in degrees and not in the absolute way that prevalent western thought imagines, because “one is a self only among other selves, a self can never be described without reference to those who surround it” (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 35).

We engage in myriad relationships during the course of our lives, and not always from within the first composition of community we were born into. The self is in constant connection in some way with others, and because of the dialogical
nature of this relational embeddedness, it is intertwined with both historical and diverse modern communities, cultures and societies. The many and diverse others we can come into relationship with in today’s complex modern societies provide us with greater accessibility to, and choice of, interlocutory webs, exposing us to more diverse ways of being and knowing in moral space. We have increasing opportunities to create, adapt, or reject self-interpretations and purposes, based on the many fresh experiences and conversations in our lives, particularly in the contemporary world. This may, at times, put the self at odds with itself, or groups of moral selves at odds with each other, and also with the historical cultural interpretations and purposes of our own particular background. As Taylor observes, our identities are “always in dialogue with, sometimes in struggle against, the identities our significant others want to recognize in us” (C. Taylor, 1991, p. 37).

Noddings introduced the relational nature of the self into mainstream moral education. Care is a relationship between the carer and the cared for, the teacher and the student, in which both are confirmed as worthy, either because the caring is worthy or the one receiving the care is worthy of it. From the perspective of education, the cared for learns two things from the carer: how to care and the imperative to care in order to sustain the worthiness of the cared for. The caring relationship is asymmetrical because when care is given by one person it must be received by another in order for there to be a caring relationship. However asymmetrical relationships are in the moment of care, they can be, indeed ideally will be, reciprocal if all learn to care (Bergman, 2004, p. 152). Noddings claims “that the greatest obligation of educators, inside and outside formal schooling, is to nurture the ethical ideals of those with whom they come in contact” (Noddings, 1984, p. 49).
**Material Embodiment**

The recognition of the embeddedness of the self in a social world also points to a connection with the physical world, or, as Taylor would have it, the material embodiment of the self (Abbey, 2000, p. 182). Our place in history and on the planet anchors the self in encounters and engagements with the physical and social world to become our unique vantage point from which we can perceive the world (Abbey, 2000, p. 180; Isaacs, 2009b, p. 4). As Merleau-Ponty expresses it, “for us the body is more than an instrument or a means; it is our expression in the world, the visible form of our intentions” (Merleau-Ponty, 1964, p. 5). Even as it provides the potential for diverse perspectives, it also means that we have the fact of our engaged embodiment with the world in common. Our interpretations may be more or less erroneous or distorted than others, but, Taylor suggests, we can assume that different perspectives have a validity of some kind as a different way of knowing, because we are all engaged and embodied in diverse ways (Abbey, 2000, p. 186). Despite the divergent outcomes, our common aim to make our way around and make sense of the world we are embodied in is “a basis for a cross-cultural and universal human understanding” (Isaacs, 2009b, p. 3).

Taylor also points out that our topographical interpretation of the physical landscape, that is, the way we describe and delineate the features of the earth, “is essential to our language of the self” (Abbey, 2000, p. 180). It provides for us a topographical way of sensing moral issues, of recognizing where our moral sources lie in relation to us, and our orientation in and on the moral terrain (C. Taylor, 1988, p. 301). Our interpretation of moral space is strongly embodied in spatial metaphors—of higher and lower, in our sights or out of sight, near and far, blocked or easily accessed, the taking of a particular perspective, and so on (C. Taylor, 1995,
Our material embodiment shows up in our language as material metaphors in order to share meaning in dialogue. Material metaphors coined by people, observes Taylor, get meaning right in a rich and profound way, anchoring moral meaning in our material embodiment (C. Taylor, 1995, p. 84). Taylor’s phenomenological account of the self sees the self as both embodied and embedded, and drawing on our shared experience of embodiment to furnish a language of metaphors to express moral feelings, concerns, and engagements (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999).

The moral sources, those moral understandings that can inspire and empower us to act in a certain way when we turn towards them, spatially speaking, are for us important features of our moral landscape (Abbey, 2000, p. 44). Whether potential moral sources for us are the interpretations of tradition or new moral understandings, we understand our own response to them in a topographical way, orienting ourselves towards or away from them, drawing nearer to or further away from them. We see our beliefs about the moral sources we are attracted to in this topographical way.

Now a doctrine that tells us where our strength lies is what I want to call a doctrine of moral sources, or a moral topography. Needless to say, moral topographies are not just doctrines handed down by canonical guardians of traditions. They can also be rooted in moral phenomenology, i.e., our experience of our moral predicament. Indeed, they must be so rooted somewhere if they are to have any credence. (C. Taylor, 1988, pp. 301-302)

The physical embodiment and social engagement of human consciousness and action within a particular locality, with its particular practical demands and cultural orientations, mould the viewing and orientation of our self-determination and purposefulness (Abbey, 2000, pp. 179, 182). Our human experience is also tied to movement in time and space, giving an active and interactive dimension to our
coping with the world. Our way of coping with the everyday is a “know-how” capacity for orienting in and navigating our physical and social environments that contribute to the forming and informing of our ordinary ways of knowing and interpreting (Abbey, 2000, p. 180). It becomes part of our background awareness of crucial assumptions, abilities and practices, which we draw on unreflectively for any of our activities and intentions. This “tacit background” provides stability and continuity for us, and when it fails, such as a stair step suddenly being too deep or someone presenting to us a view of the world that we don’t understand, we are challenged to retrieve, make explicit, reflect and reinterpret what we assumed we knew (Abbey, 2000, p. 184). It can throw us into disruption, disorientation and disconnection (Isaacs, 2009b, p. 4). From Taylor’s reading of tacit background, the whole of what we take for granted cannot be brought into the foreground at once, “understandings and activities are always parasitic on some things that cannot be brought into the focus of awareness,” and that which is in the foreground of our consciousness will eventually slip into the background (Abbey, 2000, p. 184). He proposes that we experience knowledge in a sort of continuum between unreflective engaged embodiment at one end and highly conscious disengaged abstract reasoning at the other. The highly conscious knowing presumes the reliability of the engaged, embodied outlook, yet all human ways of knowing on this continuum remain open to doubt, error and correction, “but the fundamental realities that there is a world with which I am engaged as an intentional, embodied being cannot meaningfully be thrown into question” (Abbey, 2000, p. 185).
Vulnerability

Our embodied world provides a “tacit background” to our everyday lives. It provides stability and continuity to our lives and it provides the grounding for our shared human experiences. And where that background is fractured through injury, illness, disruption in our patterns of time or in social dislocation, humans can experience deep feelings of loss, trauma, dislocation and alienation. (Isaacs, 2009b, p. 4)

The human body is the home of our becoming, the site of opportunity for flourishing. It is also a site of vulnerability in two ways. Firstly, we are physically frail and vulnerable to the power of nature. Secondly, we are vulnerable to the power of others because others have the potential to contain, exploit, violate or destroy us (Isaacs, 2007, p. 16). The constraints of human existence expose our vulnerability. “Real people,” explains Nussbaum, “are bodily and needy; they have a variety of human frailties and excellences; they are quite simply, human beings, neither machines nor angels” (Nussbaum, 2013, p. 383). Taylor notes that even in modern liberal democracies people become targets for violence from within such societies because they are considered to have violated the moral order in some way (C. Taylor, 2011).

The potential for vulnerability is both a physical and social reality for human encounters, and issues of harm are as potently present as issues of flourishing in moral space. Our vulnerability necessitates morality for us, for in its full flowering we depend on others to care, nurture, educate and protect us so we have the opportunity to overcome the limitations and vulnerabilities of our material condition (Isaacs, 2009b, p. 7). Isaacs observes that harm is the consequence of vulnerability, not just from natural events but also as a result of the actions of other persons,
intended or not (Isaacs, 2009b, p. 7). It is in our very vulnerability that Noddings sees the necessity for care, which she considers to be a human universal need (Bergman, 2004, p. 150). Bergman explains this as a necessity for morality.

To be cared for, to be the recipient of the complete and single-minded attention of another, simply because of our need for such attention, is to be initiated into and invested in the moral life. In this way, caring is not just one important or even essential element in the moral life, a complement to a commitment to justice, but indeed the very source of all moral striving and ideals. (Bergman, 2004, p. 151)

Our condition of vulnerability, whether physical, social, psychological or spiritual, leads us to include in our moral understandings notions of evil. Noddings, who asserts the need for a morality of evil, explains that it “is neither entirely out-there nor entirely in-here; it is an interactive phenomenon that requires acceptance, understanding, and steady control rather than great attempts to overcome it once and for all” (Noddings, 1989, p. 120). Nussbaum recommends that we “recognize and investigate some darker forces in the human personality that create ongoing impediments to reciprocity and equal concern” (Nussbaum, 2013, pp. 113-114). She contends that the fragile self has a tendency to protect itself by “denigrating and subordinating others,” claiming that the emotions of “disgust, envy and the desire to inflict shame on others, inflicts great damage” (Nussbaum, 2013, p. 3). The technological and economic advancement of nations protects their citizens from much that is harmful, but, as Nussbaum suggests, nations also “need the sort of daily emotion, the sympathy, tears, and laughter, that we require of ourselves as parents, lovers, and friends,” in order to “keep at bay forces that lurk in all societies and in all of us” (Nussbaum, 2013, pp. 3, 397). Fragile selves need to be nurtured in care, or as
Nussbaum calls it, love and extended compassion, to combat the narcissism fragility can bring. She sees the narcissistic impulse as ever present and requiring resources “in the form of increasingly sophisticated forms of love, reciprocity, and play, to some extent in personal relationships, but in large part in the ‘potential space’ of culture and the arts” (Nussbaum, 2013, p. 182).

**The Moral Form of Life**

To understand our moral world we have to see not only what ideas and pictures underlie our sense of respect for others but also those which underpin our notions of a full life. (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 14)

The modernity project emphasised the atomistic and rational self in modern times and this has become an unquestioned background assumption for many to know the right thing to do. The heavy focus on moral norms to judge others constrains us to a “narrow concern with what we ought to do, and not with what is valuable in itself, or what we should admire or love” (Abbey, 2000, p. 11). What we love is not very often guided by rational, instrumental reasoning; yet it can motivate us in our lives far more than such rationality can. Moral life is more broadly construed than merely encompassing “what it is right to do”. Defining moral life, or morality, purely in terms of respect for others, narrows our focus to correct responses on what is perceived to be the correct or right thing to do. Taking a deeper ontological view draws us into questions about whom we want to be when we think about respectfully responding to the rights of others or our moral responsibilities towards them. When we consider how we engage with others, we have a sense of the
kind of “who,” or self-dignity, we deeply value. Deeply connected with the kind of who we value is the kind of life we find rich and meaningful for us.

Taylor identifies these as three axes of moral thinking: “our sense of respect for and obligations to others,” “the characteristics by which we think of ourselves as commanding (or failing to command) the respect of those around us,” that is our sense of dignity, and “our understandings of what makes a full life” (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 15). In so doing, Taylor broadens the moral domain to also include questions of a cultural concern to do with “who it is good to be”. Who it is good to be has to do with identity or the self, conceptions of meaning and fulfilment in life, and visions of the good, which can be held universally, nationally, culturally, by groups or by individuals. Taylor’s philosophical anthropology of the self, already recounted, is intertwined with an account of the nature of the good life that reflects how such a life is experienced (Isaacs, 2009b, p. 1).

In this account, we are always surrounded by a moral space of issues and questions, and, in this space, we respond with strong evaluations, that is, the ranking and choosing of what is more or less worthy of our love and admiration. Strong evaluations create moral goods, which in turn serve to constitute our moral identity. The constellation of moral goods that inform our interpretations and purposes are, for us, inescapable moral horizons that serve to orient us in that space of moral issues and questions, giving us a sense of where we stand. In rudimentary or sophisticated ways, we are always on a moral quest for clarity about where we stand in the moral space of issues and questions. We most often draw on the moral horizons that we share with others, and these shared spaces, described here as social practices, are defined by the shared goods that people identify with them.
Our relational embeddedness and overlapping relational networks suggest that we have a shared moral space in our communities and societies. In our modern societies, which are not impervious to each other, the shared moral space is marked by the problematic of moral pluralism. The problematic lies in the confusion of moral horizons, exacerbated when core aspects of moral horizons are occluded. There is, however, potential for diverse peoples facing the realities of unavoidable contact to find that point of “contact unity,” which Taylor calls a “fusion of horizons,” from which relationships can flourish (Abbey, 2000, p. 68). Implicit in Taylor’s account, and made explicit here with Rollo May’s interpretation of the ethics of power in relationships, are empowering and disempowering forms of power flowing in relationships, which can create tensions in that shared moral space.

A moral horizon is inescapable, and so is coming into contact with the moral horizons of others, because we are linguistically, dialogically and relationally embedded. Practical reason is put forward in Taylor’s account as being a more phenomenologically appropriate form of finding resonance and mediating differences and tensions. For all that we are able to be aware of, and give voice to, there is a great deal of our tacit background that remains unarticulated. The articulation of moral horizons opens up opportunities for examining coherencies and tensions, for retrieving that which is loved but being lost, and for keeping in check trends that may over time be detrimental to moral flourishing.

**Strong Evaluation, Moral Goods and Moral Identity**

A good test for whether an evaluation is “strong” in my sense is whether it can be the basis for attitudes of admiration and contempt. (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 523)
Human actions are underpinned by a range of everyday desires, such as the love for a cup of coffee or a long hot shower. These primary desires we control by a second level of desires. The coffee may require spending money that is being saved for a more worthy cause, and the long hot shower may take time away from being with special friends. These Taylor refers to as strong evaluations that have drawn on strong values that “allow us to qualitatively discriminate in terms of the desires we experience or the desirability of possible actions” (Isaacs, 2009b, p. 4). Because of our strong evaluations, morality, according to Taylor, has to do with both questions about right action and questions about meaningful life (Abbey, 2000, p. 11).

Our strong evaluations provide for us the capacity to rank and contrast our desires as worthy or ignoble, valuable or base, meaningful or demeaning. In this way, they serve to give us the means by which we pursue a meaningful life and secure for us a sense of self with dignity. The capacity to strongly evaluate “lies at the heart of our freedom and of our capacity to be empowered beings” (Isaacs, 2009b, p. 5). We deeply identify with the strong values we hold, though we do not always articulate them, and neither is it necessary to articulate them in order to make strong evaluations. Whether we are aware of it or not, we make these qualitative judgements, and we need not be conscious of “the bigger moral picture that forms the background to [our] distinctions of worth” (Abbey, 2000, p. 19).

As strong evaluators, we have the capacity to choose from amongst the plurality of moral conceptions about moral being and living. By it we are able to adopt and adapt, or add to, our particular sets of values and beliefs. We are enabled by the view we hold of our lived reality in terms of our particular moral concerns, our “being and becoming” in relation to what we consider to be good (Isaacs, 2009b, p. 1). We make strong evaluations about “what it is good to do” in our relationships
with and to others, more narrowly construed by the detached reasoning mode as “what it is right to do”. We also make strong evaluations about “who it is good to be”, so we can feel a sense of dignity and self-respect, and about “why it is a good life”, so we can have a sense of meaning and fulfilment (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 4). The term strong evaluation tries to capture the role of individual choice, or will, in ascribing qualitative discriminations to goods in the moral domain (Abbey, 2000, p. 31). This is a phenomenological orientation of understanding the human being as having a self and a life that are “defined by the way things have significance for me” (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 34).

Our qualitative distinctions are the moral goods we choose to live by. Moral goods that have the capacity to shape our lives on a daily basis and over time, whether held in common with others or not, are termed by Taylor as “life goods” that “constitute the horizon for our daily being and becoming good persons” (Isaacs, 2009b, p. 6). Examples of life goods that are familiar are freedom, reason, piety, authenticity, courage and benevolence (Abbey, 2000, p. 47). Nussbaum contends that virtues are the “beauty and goodness” that we as human beings want (Nussbaum, 2013, p. 385). Combined as goods of a particular form of life, they make up a moral framework of “values and virtues that make our everyday life worth living” (Isaacs, 2009b, p. 6). Though we are all strong evaluators, we do not necessarily make qualitative discriminations the same way, and so moral goods can be understood and valued differently in different contexts. Taylor does see clusters of deeply embedded goods in the range and diversity of goods across cultures and amongst individuals that all tend to have in common (Abbey, 2000, p. 22). At the most fundamental level there are moral goods: linking us to other human beings in relational concern, love, and respect; offering us purpose and direction for a meaningful life; and endowing us
with a sense of self-esteem and dignity that others we consider worthy might acknowledge (Isaacs, 2009b, p. 6).

The horizon of moral goods that surround and guide our moral flourishing are expressive of, and given cohesion and coherence by, a “constitutive good”. A constitutive good “serves as a powerful and empowering source for that outlook; indeed, it provides the source of strong evaluations” (Abbey, 2000, p. 47). It does more than define the content of moral theory, explains Taylor, our love for it empowers us to be good and so “loving it is part of what it is to be a good human being” (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 93). The constitutive good “anchors” the life goods that are expressions of it (Isaacs, 2009b, p. 6). Taylor explains that life goods refer us to an underlying feature, a constitutive good, which commands our love and empowers us to be good in the particular way that life goods demand of us (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 93). Taylor adds that constitutive goods are always present in any moral theory, adding to the irresistible inspiration “to act in certain ways and to exhibit certain moral qualities” the equally irresistible inspiration “to love what is good” (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 93). Examples given by Taylor of constitutive goods include the following: a particular understanding of God for theists; the Idea of the Good for Plato’s moral theory; the “image of the autonomous human agent and her ability to act out of respect for the moral law” in Kantian ethics; and, “the image of the lone individual in a disenchanted world facing with lucidity and courage the abyss of meaninglessness or absurdity . . . [defying] her condition by conferring meaning on her life and finding much to affirm and celebrate in this metaphysically barren universe” for secular ethicists (Abbey, 2000, p. 48). Whatever the constitutive good, and there are many in our modern world,
such constitutive goods provide the sources of many of our social practices and cultural orientations. They reflect that we are social beings who may be socialised into, or come to adopt, practices or outlooks whose foundational, or constitutive, value belongs in the past within our communal, cultural history. Thus we can embrace a moral practice or way of life and not be aware of the constitutive good that underpins it. The constitutive good exerts a latent presence within our moral frameworks. (Isaacs, 2009b, p. 6)

In some cases, people give supreme status to a particular moral good above all other valued moral goods. Taylor calls this irregular type of good a “hypergood” and sees it as being hegemonic in the lives of those who love and admire one particularly strongly valued good above all others (Abbey, 2000, p. 35). Taylor gives as an example of a hypergood the “notion of universal justice and/or benevolence,” a moral valuing of all persons being entitled to equal respect regardless of race, class, sex, culture and religion (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 64). Hypergoods are hard won victories that have come about in response to times when respect in these different cases was restricted. Equal respect, for example, seeks to negate hierarchical assumptions about society; and, for some, Christianity is a source of radical criticism of other practices and beliefs (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 65). There are inherent dangers of conflict and tension when an ethical outlook is organized around a particular hypergood. A hypergood can hide from view the constitutive good within our moral horizon and may cause us to sacrifice other life goods (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 63). For instance, the valuing of the principle of equal respect is sometimes used to challenge and reject “the goods and virtues connected with traditional family life” (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 65).
Whatever our particular set of values and beliefs, whatever the constitutive good, and whether we have a hypergood that imperils the valuing of other goods held by others and those lesser ranked goods we might also value, the particular moral horizon we accept to have around us is one that orients us in our lives, relationships and moral decision-making. The strong evaluations we make we experience in a dynamic way, as moving closer to, or falling away from them, thereby judging our own worthiness in relation to them, giving them a powerful role in the constitution of our identity (Abbey, 2000, p. 24; C. Taylor, 1989, p. 62). The combination of our life goods, which Taylor calls moral “frameworks” or moral “horizons,” provide us with “a kind of orientation essential to our identity” (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 78).

**Inescapable Moral Horizons, Historical and Cultural Moral Sources, and Modern Moral Pluralism**

Our strong evaluations cluster around a set of moral goods that come to feature as life goods for us. They often form the tacit background for our moral judgements, intuitions or reactions (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 25). These incomparably fuller, higher, purer, deeper or more meaningful qualitative distinctions are crucial to us and form the moral framework, or moral horizon, of our reflections on who we think we or others are, who we want to be, and about what we are doing and might want to do (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 19). While we can certainly choose what we love and admire, a framework of some kind is inescapable because by it we come to interpret the moral and spiritual space that our selves are inseparable from, our orientation within that space, and our horizon of aspirations (Abbey, 2000, p. 34; C. Taylor, 1989, p. 112). A horizon of moral values of some kind or another is a part of our language of self-understanding and is essential for us to have a notion of self, essence or true being.
I want to defend the strong thesis that doing without frameworks is utterly impossible for us; otherwise put, that the horizons within which we live our lives and which make sense of them have to include these strong qualitative discriminations. Moreover, this is not meant just as a contingently true psychological fact about human beings . . . Rather the claim is that living within such strongly qualified horizons is constitutive of human agency, that stepping outside these limits would be tantamount to stepping outside what we would recognize as integral, that is, undamaged human personhood. (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 27)

Our moral horizons are configured and reconfigured in our dialogical relationships through language. Our conceptions of the good and the good life have background understandings that are sourced not only from dialoguers in our present, but also from dialoguers in the past whose voices echo in our particular webs of interlocution and the language we use together, in the present. These background understandings are often unarticulated, the retrieval of which Taylor embarked on in his articulation of the moral sources of modern Western culture (C. Taylor, 1989, 2007). Our current moral understandings, then, are prefigured in the overlay of relational and time-related features of our being, in other words, our historical and cultural embeddedness. The movement of conceptions of the good and the good life through history and culture, which Taylor has retrieved for Western sources of the modern self, is a story of adaption and adoption, refinement and rejection. It is the result of overlaying and multifaceted conversations and practices through time, and because of the boundaries of culture and language, within particular cultures and groups of peoples. The embeddedness of our moral horizons in particular societies, histories and cultures is inescapable for us. We could say that we cannot avoid receiving our inheritance, and, by the same token, we can retrieve it and reinterpret
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it, accepting parts we really love and admire, and rejecting that which is repugnant and incoherent to the whole.

A moral horizon that surrounds a way of life has, or is informed by, one or more moral sources, sources embedded in our history and culture. Different persons and communities interpret moral sources in particular ways. Their interpretations become the constitutive good for a particular way of life, to underpin the life goods that give shape and texture to that way of life. Pre-moderns conceived of their moral horizons as external to themselves, as transcendent from human beings, such as God for theists, Reason for Kantian ethics, and Plato’s Idea of the Good (Abbey, 2000, p. 48). But we moderns conceptualize our moral horizons as internal, conceptualising that identity is to be found within, in other words, that we have a self (Abbey, 2000, p. 85). Though European culture had begun the trend much earlier, for England and the new America it was during the eighteenth century that three broad moral horizons began to emerge as moral sources for the English-speaking world.

Reason serves as the moral source for one of these broadly conceived horizons. In this conceptualising of the good life, the good individual is disengaged from outside influences and finds the good in rational organization and instrumental control of both the non-rational self and nature. Included in this understanding of the good self is the expressive power of the individual and the related “quest to articulate and live in accordance with its own authenticity” (Abbey, 2000, p. 96).

Nature, the whole of which the individual is but a part, serves as the moral source of a second of the three broadly conceived horizons. Evolving from the Romantic’s philosophical idea that Nature is a source of the good, the individual’s emotions and sentiments, the non-rational parts dismissed in the instrumentalist interpretation of the good, are understood to be important aspects of the harmonious
and natural whole. Making contact with Nature is done in the same way as contact is made with Reason, through a turning inward. The individual connects, or rather reconnects, with Nature, the moral source that is both within and outside (Abbey, 2000, p. 97).

God, the theistic one of Christianity and the oldest of the three moral sources, is ultimately the source of the other two, according to Taylor (C. Taylor, 1989, 2007). The religious origins of the detached, punctual self of the scientific revolution are because the theistic moral horizon interpreted that the “awesome powers of human reason and will are God-made and part of God’s plan; more, they are what constitutes the image of God in us” (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 315). Nature, too, was first conceived of as good because it was an expression of God’s goodness and love. Through the many interpretations and reinterpretations by people living with the conceptions of Reason and Nature eventually lost touch with their theistic foundations to become understood as moral sources adequate enough for a good life without recourse to the God of Christianity to find validation (Abbey, 2000, p. 98).

Something important and irreversible did happen in the latter part of the nineteenth century with the rise of unbelief in Anglo-Saxon countries. It was then that they moved from a horizon in which belief in God in some form was virtually unchallengeable to our present predicament in which theism is one option among others, in which moral sources are ontologically diverse. (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 401)

The three broad moral sources of God, Nature and Reason have been interpreted in multiple ways to give rise to diverse ethical values, standards, strong evaluations, life goods and expressions of moral sources as constitutive goods (Abbey, 2000, p. 50). Modern life presents even greater moral complexity as peoples
of different histories and cultures come into contact with each other. Taylor’s moral frameworks, or moral horizons, and historical retrieval of moral sources, at least for European culture and more specifically for Anglo-Saxon countries in recent centuries, offers a strong account of the moral form of life. The diversity, complexity and moral plurality of our lives, explains Isaacs, “opens up many ways of being and becoming, of moving towards the good” (Isaacs, 2007, p. 18).

The modern quest to find or create a believable, or more believable, framework is a moral quest carried out in our dialogical engagements with the language we have available to us as we seek for greater meaning and self-understanding. Our struggles in this regard are made more difficult because of the implicit nature of our moral frameworks. They are further exacerbated when what we explicitly affirm does not match with the tacit background we assume, but do not bring into the fore, in our deliberations (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 9). We struggle, too, when our horizon clashes with different and diverse others (Abbey, 2000, p. 163). Taylor’s ontological explanations make it possible to understand the permeability of our moral horizons, as we endeavour to take account of other people’s meanings and beliefs. Such a feature makes it possible for a fusion of horizons (Abbey, 2000, p. 161). Indeed, a quest for a more believable framework seeks to result in a fusion of horizons. Moral pluralism requires greater comprehensiveness in our interpretive attempts to make sense of the complex moral space of issues within which we now exist.

Because we cannot but orient ourselves to the good, and thus determine our place relative to it and hence determine the direction of our lives, we must inescapably understand our lives in narrative form, as a “quest”. But one could perhaps start from another point: because we have to determine our place in relation to the good, therefore we cannot be without an orientation
to it, and hence must see our life in story. From whichever direction, I see
these conditions as connected facets of the same reality, inescapable
structural requirements of human agency. (C. Taylor, 1989, pp. 52-53)

Together Goods and Social Practices

Taylor includes another type of good necessary for moral flourishing in his
account of the moral form of life, one that discredits “the widespread view that the
pursuit of the Good is purely an individual affair” (Isaacs, 2009b, p. 6). Together
goods, or shared goods, while easily considered as goods for individuals, “can only
be generated in common with others” (Abbey, 2000, p. 119). Friendship, for
example, is a good that is shared between friends, requiring both to consider it as
such for it to be a friendship, and is strengthened by the friends’ shared
understanding that it is good (Abbey, 2000, p. 119). Some of our life goods are
unable to be a good for us without them being shared with others, such as language,
dance, love, friendship and common self-rule for example (Isaacs, 2009b, p. 6).
Shared goods can only be affirmed by a “we” rather than an “I” (Abbey, 2000, p.
120). Without the stability of creative and enabling relationships that are loving,
caring and affirming, the full flowering of the self is not easily, if at all, realised. At
the earliest stages of human life this is found in the social practices of family and the
immediate cultural community, and later in the dialogical and relational webs that
open out into the wider social engagements of various occupations and life pursuits
(Isaacs, 2009b, p. 7).

Social practices exist as webs of human relationships with shared moral
understandings, and there are many that exist within the broader community. They
can only exist in and through the interlocutors and practitioners in a shared network
that holds an overall common purpose that provides a binding unity. A social practice embodies a particular set of shared understandings and actions that provides the practitioner with resources for their own identity and which constitutes the collective consciousness for that practice and ultimately becomes its traditions. These ways of knowing and acting in the world achieve their continuity and adaptability through learning and socialization, thereby facilitating a facet of flourishing for the practitioner and perhaps others who may benefit from such practice in their world. Well-established social practices develop institutional structures of decision-making and legitimation to guard the authenticity and continuity of the practice, strengthening the longevity of such notions of good that come to be identified with the practice. Social practices are connected together through individuals, or groups of individuals, who interact with the many webs of relationships that exist in the broader context of large communities, societies, and even internationally. Social practices are vulnerable as they are dependent on the positive strong evaluations of its adherents and can also be shaped by strong social forces beyond their scope or control. There is the opportunity to generate much good, and many do, but social practices are also capable of some or great evil, wittingly or unwittingly, being or becoming vehicles of discrimination, oppression, exploitation and violence to those outside the practice or even to some within (Isaacs, 2004, pp. 3-8).

Taking into account the scope and context of a social practice, such as moral education, there are interwoven value sets that give shape and form to it. Goal values focus on the overall purpose and identity of a practice. Values to do with ways of knowing, epistemic values, associated with the practice deal with the concepts, beliefs, theories and explanatory frameworks. Values to do with ways of doing, procedural values, complement the epistemic values to guide the practitioner in
realizing the ideals of the practice. Procedural and epistemic values are established by organizational values through induction and training, and strong evaluation at this level also legitimises new ways of knowing and doing as well as new practitioners. Social practices are a means by which a member can actualize their own being and become the good practitioner, thus providing a set of identity values that encompass both moral and living reality. Professional values associated with the standards befitting the highest expression of proficiency, expertise, altruism and autonomy in the practice are to do with the covenantal relationship between the practitioner and the practice, as well as the rest of society that the practice may serve. There are also external values belonging to the broader social environment of the practice that enhance the flourishing of a practice, harmonize with its existence, or create tension within to jeopardize the integrity of the practice or its relationship with and existence within the wider community (Isaacs, 2004, pp. 8-12).

The relationships that the self engages with dialogically are also framed within social practices. The values, or ethical orientations, of a social practice influence the nature of human engagement with others, for others, alongside others, and of the self, for those who come within its sphere (Isaacs, 2004, p. 12). The self-interpreting person’s capacity to shape their own being and becoming is negotiated through the dialogical interactions that take place through many such engagements (Isaacs, 2009b, p. 3). The entangled webs of many relational engagements, and therefore social practices, expose the self to the fusion, and perhaps confusion, of identity and purpose in self-understanding. The engagement with “swarms of participations” not only provides moral experiences, it is also a condition of moral existence (Massey, 2010, p. 52).
One of the distinctive features of modern liberal societies is the commitment to encouraging and supporting the development of diverse social practices. The modernity project that prefigured the birth of the scientific and industrial revolutions also foreshadowed the unprecedented social change that has become the complexity of modern life. The establishment of social practices such as education, health, policing, government, various industries and business services, added to the now specialised practices of primary industries that consumed the daily hours of living for many people in the past. These collective human endeavours that have established traditions, practices, institutions and cultures are underpinned by together goods that many respect, admire and even love (Isaacs, 2009b, p. 8). These kinds of social practices enable further diversification of ways of life, including hobbies and pastimes, and specialisation within major practices, such as moral education within education, or previously inconceivable ones such as those enabled by the advent of the internet. No matter the social practice, all of them “are vulnerable to social forces of disruption, destruction, exclusion and apathy” (Isaacs, 2009b, p. 7). Without strong moral foundations, that necessarily include a community of dialoguers committed to the same constitutive good, social practices are vulnerable to corruption or disintegration.

An important feature of many such endeavours is that they instantiate, or embody, certain constitutive goods and their continuation through time depends both on continuing membership and a fidelity to the constitutive goods. (Isaacs, 2009b, p. 8)

The very complexity of modern societies is vulnerable in itself, being made possible through a crucial social activity that underpins all the social practices and
multiple ways of living a good life: that of being a moral actor in human engagements to, for, with and alongside each other (Isaacs, 2004, p. 13).

**Shared Moral Space and the Problematic in Moral Pluralism**

It will be my claim that there is a great deal of motivated suppression of moral ontology among our contemporaries, in part because the pluralist nature of modern society makes it easier to live that way, but also because of the great weight of modern epistemology … and, behind this, of the spiritual outlook associated with this epistemology. (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 10)

Detached reason, on which modern epistemology rests, has produced an acultural morality that characterizes English-speaking philosophy, yet it does not easily deal with the pluralism of spiritual outlooks surrounding us in our everyday lives. Instead of settling once and for all what our moral obligations might be, detached reason has become another choice of spiritual outlook among many. The shared moral space, or “common space,” presided over by this acultural morality is assumed to be neutral regarding spiritual outlook, yet it is based on the detached reasoning of autonomous human agents to determine “what it is right to do”. However, both the assumptions and the deductions are not always clear and certainly not unified. Taylor views this common space in a different way. Rather than being a neutral space, Taylor considers it to be the place of sharing and deliberating what is important to me and us, and is therefore plural.

Language, central to Taylor’s expansion of ontological considerations, is not only the means by which we make sense of what is important for me as a self, but also for what is before us as moral selves together. As interlocutors using language, a common space opens up between us as the interlocutors, and through us into the
webs of interlocution that exist within a community and between communities (C. Taylor, 1985, p. 259; 1989, p. 35). In our dialogical engagement, we not only configure or communicate our interpretations of self and that which we come to hold as worthy (Abbey, 2000, p. 67; C. Taylor, 1985, p. 8), we also work out, adapt and perhaps expect to change our interpretations together. In this way, the common space that exists in our webs of interlocution leads to a vast array of different goods being available, many of which are more or less worthy of affirmation by me or by us, whether we actually choose to give our allegiance to them or not (Abbey, 2000, p. 12). Far from being a neutral space, the common space is a space in which we work out our stance by choosing from an array of possible moral interpretations. It is always open to interpretations and reinterpretations, to common interpretations and diverse interpretations. It is presided over by the many and not the few; it belongs to everyone who engages in language because the common space is made up of the webs of interlocution. In this way it is never neutral and always pluralistic. On this reading, the unity of the common space cannot be brought about by the undue influence of a few, and perhaps its unity can only ever be approached but never achieved.

The moral pluralism to which Taylor refers is at a fundamentally deeper level than a mere choosing of moral goods from many possible moral goods laid out in an ethically relativist way. Moral pluralism for Taylor is due to our ontological condition that we draw on some kind of spiritual outlook when we face the choice of so many possible moral goods. The culturally and historically derived powers that modern English-speaking selves draw on for making sense of self and moral life are indeed plural and not always without tension between them.
What I hope emerges from this lengthy account of the growth of the modern identity is how all-pervasive it is, how much it envelops us, and how deeply we are implicated in it: in a sense of self defined by the powers of disengaged reason as well as the creative imagination, in the characteristically modern understandings of freedom and dignity and rights, in the ideals of self-fulfilment and expression, and in the demands of universal benevolence and justice. (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 503)

In earlier times, multiple frameworks were not conceivable, all existed in and related to one common framework. Frameworks today are problematic because they give rise to moral plurality and it is difficult to conceive of all agreeing. To this modern predicament is added the complication of diverse cultures entering into our view in the moral landscape. One may stand against the views of others, or one view may be considered alongside many, or views may be quite tentative as something much better is sought for like a moral quest (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 17). The pluralist common space has, according to Taylor, further complexity for us in the modern world. The smorgasbord of goods contains irreconcilable moral values, leading us to affirm some as worthy, yet be compelled to sacrifice them as we experience life and navigate that moral and spiritual space of questions (Abbey, 2000, p. 13).

We can, in principle, understand and recognize the goods of another society as goods-for-everyone (and hence ourselves). That these are not with our own home-grown goods-for-everyone may indeed be tragic but is no different in principle from any of the other dilemmas we may be in through facing incombinable goods, even within our own way of life. There is no guarantee that universally valid goods should be perfectly combinable, and certainly not in all situations. (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 61)
Taylor sees embedded in the way we make our strong evaluations to establish, sustain and re-establish a kind of narrative unity in our moral interpretations, something he calls practical reason. To live life involves making strong evaluations to evaluate and re-evaluate our life goods and to establish, sustain and re-establish a kind of narrative unity in our moral interpretations based upon them. Practical reasoning characterises our own mode of narrating about moral understandings (Abbey, 2000, p. 166). We seek a narrative plausibility in our lives with respect to the life goods we love and admire. Isaacs sees that “certainty is not possible in the ethical engagement,” but what we might strive for is “reasonableness,” the kind of reasonableness that narrative can deliver (Isaacs, 2001, p. 17). Kearney explains that for narrative to be credible it requires practical wisdom, identified by Aristotle as phronesis, and which Kearney explains is “capable of respecting the singularity of situations as well as the nascent universality of values aimed at by human actions” (Kearney, 2002, p. 143). Noddings’ care ethics sees practical reason occurring in the caring relationship. The carer experiences engrossment in the situation of the other, and in making the caring response draws on “rationality, evaluation, judgment, something like Aristotle’s phronesis” (Bergman, 2004, p. 151). Reasonableness and practical wisdom identify the same feature in the moral form of life that Taylor identifies as practical reason. Alongside our strong evaluations, practical reasoning can and does go on implicitly without our being aware of our moral judgments (Abbey, 2000, p. 20).

Our modern world brings us into contact with different others, sometimes vastly different others, challenging us in such a way that our implicit reactions are often having to be brought out into explicit view to be defended, altered or even
rejected. That strong evaluations are reflective in our nature, even when implicit, means that when explicit they give rise to strong evaluative language (Abbey, 2000, p. 20). Such language makes the articulation of our tacit backgrounds discernible, giving access to the realm in which ontological claims “can be rationally argued about and sifted” (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 8).

The way we live with the inescapable diversity in our moral lives gives Taylor insight into how our practical reasoning about morality might work. The narrative approach we take as we struggle for unity of meaning in our own life is a way of making reasonable sense (Abbey, 2000, p. 39). Taylor argues that our moral understandings are built on what we already know and value, and not from any proof based on something outside of our understanding,

My conceited confidence that there is only one moral issue at stake here gives way to an appreciation of the legitimacy of other demands as I mature. I read both these transitions as gains, and thus I embrace the latter views over the earlier ones. But in neither case can I do anything with the suggestion that it might all be illusion and that I ought to defend myself against this possibility by stepping altogether outside any reliance either on intuition or on sense of purchase. This demand is in its nature impossible. The most reliable moral view is not one that would be grounded quite outside our intuitions but one that is grounded on our strongest intuitions, where these have successfully met the challenge of proposed transitions away from them. (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 75)

Taylor suggests that the practical reasoning in our own narrations about moral understandings can be expanded “to reach agreement between disputing positions” (Abbey, 2000, p. 166). Through comparing, questioning, articulating and re-articulating views, the interlocutors reconcile differences, agree one of the positions
is better than another, or a fusion of horizons may occur (Abbey, 2000, p. 167). Essential in the process is the principle of initial respect for the views others have of the world—cultural, religious, political, ethical or otherwise—so an insightful appreciation of differences empowers interlocutors in their dialogue (Abbey, 2000, p. 166). As with the continual quest for clarity and coherency of moral understanding in one’s life, so too is the development of practical reasoning between people, particularly one marked with respect, one of reasoning in transitions (Abbey, 2000, p. 167).

So like the knowledge obtainable in the human sciences, practical reason is open-ended; because it too deals with human affairs, its results cannot aspire to some ultimate or definitive status. (Abbey, 2000, p. 168)

Taylor makes the connection between practical reason, reasonableness or practical wisdom, and articulation. The outcome of such conversations are made all the more powerful for all interlocutors when the matter in question is explored and expressed clearly by and for all sides (Abbey, 2000, p. 168).

**Articulation of Moral Horizons**

As much as we are able to be aware of and give voice to our moral understandings that inform our moral responses, there is a great deal of it that remains as tacit background and goes unarticulated (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 9). This tacit background is historically and culturally embedded; that is, our understandings of the good are sourced from the many shared interpretations and developing of practices in the past. Some interpretations were adopted by many and have been embedded in practices over time. Some have endured and some have become meshed with other enduring and powerful conceptions. These continue to move through our webs of
interlocution, which have unavoidable relational and dialogical connections to the past. They have also entered into our making sense of the world through a language already laden with meaning built up over many dialogical encounters, historical and present. These background understandings inform the foundations of our moral horizons, the articulation of which, Taylor contends, “can bring us closer to the good as a moral source” (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 92).

“Making sense” here means articulating what makes these responses appropriate: identifying what makes something a fit object for them and correlative formulating more fully the nature of the response as well as spelling out what all this presupposes about ourselves and our situation in the world. What is articulated here is the background we assume and draw on in any claim to rightness, part of which we are forced to spell out when we have to defend our responses as the right ones. This articulation can be very difficult and controversial. (C. Taylor, 1989, pp. 8-9)

The articulation of the historical and cultural dimensions of our moral horizons opens up opportunities for examining coherencies and tensions, for retrieving that which is loved but being lost, and for evaluating trends so that over time they do not become detrimental to moral flourishing. Without the kind of articulation Taylor is advocating, our examination of our moral horizon/s or the moral pluralism that confronts us can only draw on the moral understandings most familiar to us. These may only provide a hazy picture or a restricted view, and for this reason, Taylor argues, “the agent himself or herself is not necessarily the best authority, at least not at the outset” because so much is implicit and perhaps buried in the cultural histories of the many strong evaluations gone before in the many webs of interlocution (Abbey, 2000, p. 46; C. Taylor, 1989, p. 9).
The important role that articulation has in moral theorizing is to make “clear and explicit those goods which underpin and are presupposed in the moral values, moral practices and moral attitudes that we might subscribe to” (Isaacs, 2009b, p. 6). Taylor explains that our moral goods “only exist for us through *some* articulation,” for without articulation there is no adhesion and “these goods are not even options” (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 91). The usual tacit background state of our moral framework, parts of which only come into our conscious conversations when challenged in dialogical and active engagement with others, means the constitutive good that plays a central and fundamental role often remains latent, commanding our love through the moral values that are admired because of it (Abbey, 2000, p. 47). Taylor suggests that “articulation can bring us closer to the good as a moral source, can give it power” (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 92).

To come closer to them, to have a clearer view of them, to come to grasp what they involve, is for those who recognize them to be moved to love or respect them, and through this love/respect to be better enabled to live up to them. And articulation can bring them closer. That is why words can empower; why words can at times have tremendous moral force. (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 96)

Articulation of the interpretations of moral sources, the constitutive goods that underpin our moral values and that motivate our moral responses, can cause us to be moved by the moral source and to want to move ever closer to it: “loving the good and wanting to act in accordance with it are inextricably linked for Taylor” (Abbey, 2000, p. 47).
The necessity of constitutive goods and the power of articulation to inspire
restores the dimension of love to the centre of moral theory. (Abbey, 2000,
p. 49)

Contemporary societies manifest a complexity of plural and diverse moral
goods that different persons live by, the articulation of which allows us to recognise
them and “lays the foundation for an informed toleration of moral differences”
(Isaacs, 2009b, p. 7). The impact of articulation to bring out our deep cultural
practical values can also bring out the deep cultural practical values of other cultural
groups with very different histories, languages, moral sources and moral
understandings. Diverse peoples are being brought together by social forces beyond
anyone’s power to halt. If Taylor’s explanation of articulation and practical
reasoning hold true in lived reality, then our combined moral flourishing could be
enhanced, enriched, magnified and possibly be the cause for strengthened relations.
Further, as Taylor explains, our modern senses of the self, and the selves we are
becoming in this current context of cultural and moral plurality,

   not only are linked to and made possible by new understandings of good but
   also are accompanied by (i) new forms of narrativity and (ii) new
   understandings of social bonds and relations. …Along with these forms of
   narrativity go new understandings of society and forms of living together.
   
   (C. Taylor, 1989, pp. 105-106)

Moral Engagement

The moral ontology to which this research is turned understands the self as
interpretive and relational, a richer account than that of a rational being with an
atomistic autonomy. The self is first and foremost an active participant engaged with others in seeking to make and find meaning in a complex world. Our moral experience is a moral engagement with, and in, the world. It involves the transformation of *be-ing* within an historical and relational process of *be-coming* (Isaacs, 2001, pp. 7-8; 2006, pp. 4-7). The interpretive self, being so embedded, creates a fusion of moral horizons drawn from the plurality of moral frameworks in its webs of interlocution (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 36) in moral deliberations deriving meaning from particular lived and interlocutory experiences.

Moral experience is more than a detached ethical decision-making process when faced with a moral dilemma. Our strong evaluations connect us to our life goods and therefore our moral identity. The good we aspire to and the goods we draw on to make our moral responses are already deeply loved and admired. Attachment, adherence and love are embedded in our moral responses, making the ethical decision-making process a much fuller engagement than the detached reasoning about an ethical dilemma. Viewing the ontological dimensions recasts instrumental engagement as moral engagement. Taylor views modernity as a global moral engagement where disengaged freedom, instrumental reason and universal equality have intrinsic attraction and are more than instrumental in that they have “inherent power as moral ideals” (Abbey, 2000, p. 79; C. Taylor, 1999, pp. 158-159).

Our moral engagements today are, more often than not, embedded in morally pluralistic contexts, drawing on diverse historical and cultural backgrounds of purposing engagers, making the moral experience even more complex. Moral engagements become sites to pursue our modern quests to make sense of such plurality, sites in which the articulation of moral horizons can enhance our moral
responses (Abbey, 2000, pp. 41-42). Moral engagement, then, plays a crucial role in the identity of selves and groups, and in the moral form of life.

According to Isaacs and Massey (1994), moral engagement, or ethical encounters, requires fuller reflection than just an analytic approach that seeks to arrive at an ethical understanding or decision. They argue that there are four dimensions\(^8\) to any ethical engagement. Ethical decision-making is a part of the appraisive dimension, and the appraisive act is situated within a broader picture that encompasses hermeneutic, appreciative and transformative considerations (Isaacs & Massey, 1994, p. 2). These four dimensions formed the research framework of the transformative ethics program at the Queensland University of Technology, sometimes referred to as an “everyday ethics approach”. Everyday applied ethics research seeks to create fuller ethical understandings from the everyday experiences of people engaging with others by recognising the particular histories, values, aspirations, flow of power and the vulnerabilities exposed. Moral engagements are understood to occur within and across multiple social practices, each also culturally and historically embedded, creating complex layers of valuing and purposing. Everyday applied ethics research examines the many layers of multiple goods and moral pluralities surrounding the particular moral engagement in view, appreciating the complexity of the moral landscape in which it is embedded. As moral education is a social practice, and the experience of it is a form of moral engagement.

Three aspects of moral engagement are important to the conceptual framework underpinning this study. The first is the forms of power and ethics in relationships that shape the nature of engagements into experiences of empowerment or

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\(^8\) These four dimensions are the hermeneutic (historical and cultural), the appreciative (recognition of identities and dispositions), the appraisive (deliberative and decision-making) and the transformative (strategies for change) (Isaacs & Massey, 1994).
disempowerment. The second is viewing moral engagements as spaces of expressive-collaborative morality between interlocutors in a web. The third is seeing moral engagements as spaces for encountering the good.

**Forms of Power and Ethics in Relationships**

For Taylor, ethics is about being and becoming as relationally embedded selves. Implicit in Taylor’s account is that a being seeking to become exercises a certain kind of purposive power. This raises an issue of the ethics of power in relationships. Rollo May provides a useful discussion of the different forms of power in human relationships, practices, institutions and communities (R. May, 1972, pp. 99-119). May defines power, at its very basic level is “the ability to cause or prevent change,” the power to be and become, a power endemic to human being (R. May, 1972, p. 99). May identifies five forms of power that can be expressed in relationships: exploitative, manipulative, competitive, nurturative and integrative (R. May, 1972, pp. 99-119).

The expression of negative forms of power has the intention to disable or disempower the other, or others, in order to benefit the self or a particular group. The view of the other is that of someone not deserving of respect, admiration and love. The power that destroys others, relationships, institutions, practices, communities and cultures is exploitative. The exploiter’s power is identified with force, and has associated with it the threat of violence. The exploiter is only in relationship with others to use them in ways that may meet their own ends and purposes, with no value given to the vulnerability or harm the other may be exposed to, except for the greater

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9 Rollo May uses the term nutrient, though a term in more recent use in nursing practice is nurturative and serves to more closely align with the nurturing activity of relationships shaped by this form of power. The term nurturative is preferred in this thesis.
use of exploitative power. The other becomes the victim of such oppressive power and, given no choice, is rendered completely powerless. Manipulative power over the other finds ways to cause others to act, or think, to the benefit of the manipulator, and is associated with the disabling of human freedom and dignity of the other. Competitive power can both empower and disempower. In its negative form it is power against the other, where more power is gained at the expense of the power of the other in some way. In its positive form competition can add vitality to human relations, as well as be used as an incentive for self-improvement.

The most positive forms of power in relationships are for the benefit and moral flourishing of the other. Nurturative power is focused on enabling and empowering the other. Nurturative power can be linked to the ethic of care. At the most fundamental level, the vulnerable and marginalized are dependent on nurturing power. The use of such power is motivated by concern for the welfare of the other or others, for example in parent-child and teacher-student relationships. Noddings comments on “the greatest obligation of educators, inside and outside formal schooling, is to nurture the ethical ideals of those with whom they come in contact” (Noddings, 1984, p. 49). Nussbaum extends this view to state that “educational inclusion is a matter of changing hearts and minds,” contending that social measures must support such policies “by shaping an emotional climate hostile to shaming and supportive of compassion” (Nussbaum, 2013, p. 371).

Finally, integrative power is used together with the other or others. Through integrative power both the self and others, their relationships, practices, institutions and communities experience flourishing, becoming richer, fuller, deeper, purer and more worthy. Nussbaum’s understanding of critical freedom resonates with May’s integrative power because the invitation to share in the strong emotions that bring
about the moral flourishing of all is an invitation, not a coercion, to integrative power (Nussbaum, 2013, p. 389). The life goods that govern the nature of power in our engagements with others seek the protection from harm for each person encompassed within that moral horizon. Enabling and empowering power is inclusive of others and creates opportunities for enhancement and flourishing, for enrichment and constructive transformation. Disabling and disempowering power excludes certain others, creating vulnerability and leading to harm or destruction. Humans cannot flourish in settings governed by exploitative and manipulative power. Humans flourish in contexts of appropriately balanced competitive power, and the positive forms of power, namely nurturative and integrative. The latter forms of power are fundamental for sustaining together goods, and therefore our relationships, practices, institutions and communities. Modern societies are becoming ever more complex spaces of diverse groups with divergent ways of being and seeing. Complex moral engagements that are characterised by negative forms of power have a disempowering impact on both those exploiting, manipulating and competing in negative ways, as well as those being exploited, manipulated and competed against. Those engagements characterised by positive forms of power have the potential for the flourishing of those both nurturing and being nurtured and for all those seeking to collaborate together.

*Moral Engagement as the Expressive-Collaborative Space of a Web of Interlocutors*

The result of moral negotiations with others about understanding and putting into practice moral visions is that we become morally accountable to each other, thereby contributing to the cohesion of a society of networked social practices and
webs of interlocution. The negotiation and accountability within the moral space of a social practice, and further of the cultural milieu of social practices, is identified by Margaret Urban Walker as an expressive-collaborative model of morality (Walker, 2007, p. 66).

Moral engagements are sites of experiencing and dialoguing about our being and becoming and the aspirations of the good life we might have. They are engagements of human collaboration in which persons express their moral understandings through the sharing of narratives and moral responses. Such expressive-collaborative spaces are relationally based, and therefore webs of interlocution.

Moral engagement thus becomes a continuous task of working with others to build expressive-collaborative spaces (Walker, 1993; 1998); expressive spaces in that they allow our selves to express their being and becoming through the sharing of narratives, ethical reflection and ethical responses; and collaborative spaces in that they recognize that as relational, social and inter-connected beings we recognize that the pursuit of the good has an unavoidable collaborative dimension to it. (Isaacs, 2010, p. 139)

As the dynamics of power, moral interpretations of the good, and moral responses and reactions of the participants are played out in any “relational and social space,” many and complex conversations and narratives emerge (Isaacs, 2010, p. 135). Resolutions to the problematic in human engagement are primarily an outcome of negotiation when seen from the narrative perspective of moral deliberation (Walker, 2007, p. 36). Narrative elaboration amongst webs of interlocutors opens up a process of self-interpretation and shared interpretation. This allows fuller considerations of how the moral good, as jointly understood in
community through negotiation, can guide the resolution of moral issues. Walker’s negotiation is similar to Taylor’s practical reason. Interlocutors compare, question, articulate and re-articulate views, and a sort of negotiation, or practical reason, allows either the reconciliation of differences, the agreement that a position is better, or it results in a further fusion of horizons (Abbey, 2000, p. 167).

Walker explains that the interchange and sharing of narrative interpretations serves to keep moral selves accountable to each other (Walker, 2007, p. 37). According to Walker, morality is “a medium of progressive acknowledgement and adjustment among people in (or in search of) a common and habitable moral world” (Walker, 2007, p. 35). Taylor sees this engagement as historically and culturally embedded and not as singular events occurring in isolation.

The meanings people give to their situation must be taken into consideration in trying to explain that situation, and conversely the inquirer’s own cultural heritage will play an important role in shaping his understanding of others. Taking culture seriously also means respecting its diversity across time and place, and abandoning any ambition to come up with universalizable, context-free and law-like generalizations about human action. (Abbey, 2000, p. 161)

Nussbaum sees a person loving a person, city or country despite their/its flaws and faults. While not satisfied with all that a person or country is, people will embrace the imperfections as they also strive for justice (Nussbaum, 2013, p. 393). Nussbaum argues that love, in a just society, enables diverse people “to embrace one another and enter into a common future,” which Walker would call an expressive-collaborative space (Nussbaum, 2013, p. 393; Walker, 1993, 2007).
In Noddings’ account of care ethics, accountability is also an outcome of “a society composed of people capable of caring—people who habitually draw on a well-established ideal—will move toward social policies consonant with an ethic of care” (Noddings, 2002b, p. 223). The respectful, compassionate, caring or loving engagement between moral selves serves to keep moral space open (Isaacs, 2010, p. 138; Walker, 1993). An ethical engagement, then, is where the inter-subjective and relational nature of moral being enables, and is enabled by, openness and inclusion of the other, empowering and being empowered by voicing and listening, and results in shared empathetic understanding and transformative response (Isaacs, 2010, p. 139). According to Noddings and care ethics, the self is always embedded in many relationships and through dialogue is always engaged in collaboratively authoring the self in a relational way (Bergman, 2004, p. 153). Nussbaum extends the view of the expressive-collaborative space to that of a society “aspiring toward justice and human capability” (Nussbaum, 2013, p. 200). Nussbaum suggests governments might proceed towards such aspirations by giving space to improvisation, critical independence and individuality (Nussbaum, 2013, p. 200). Further, she sees that governments have a powerful role to play in cultivating the expressive-collaborative space in their nation, and suggests they must engage with people as they are, their particular historically and socially shaped loves and cares—even if ultimately to lead them to a place altogether new … good public emotions do embody general principles, but they clothe them in the garb of concrete narrative history. (Nussbaum, 2013, p. 201)
Encounters With the Good

We encounter the good as materially embodied and relationally embedded beings, beings who are vulnerable to harm and, therefore, in need of morality to reduce harm and increase our opportunities for realising our goals, that is, for flourishing. Yet, we also encounter the good in other ways, namely as spiritual or transcendent encounters, and in the encounter within with the inner self. These encounters with the good inspire and give momentum to our moral being and becoming. They invite our continued moral flourishing.

Encountering the good in the realm of the ineffable, as Isaacs describes it, are moments when we “feel gifted, blessed and at peace” and become “aware of the joyfulness, peace and contentment to our lives” (Isaacs, 2007, p. 17). We find beauty in moral good just as we find beauty in physical things. Taylor restores the idea of loving goodness with the notion that moral sources or constitutive goods empower us because we find them worthy of our love and respect (Abbey, 2000, p. 49). Keltner and Haidt propose that moral beauty displayed by people trigger in other people an emotional response of elevation (Keltner & Haidt, 2003, p. 305). Diessner sees the moral emotion of elevation could be caused by the appreciation and cognition of moral beauty (Diessner, 2004, p. 23). Isaacs identifies deeper connections in the recognition of everyday moral beauty:

The good we are drawn to in moral commitment may be epiphanic expressions of a deeper constitutive good that inspires and draws us to itself in admiration and love. (Isaacs, 2007, p. 18)

The deeper constitutive good that inspires us and gives power to the epiphany, or what we are attracted to as moral beauty, is deeply connected to historical moral
sources, as Taylor’s historical retrieval demonstrates (C. Taylor, 1989). Nussbaum supports this view by contending that it is “false to the complexity of history, to think that beauty spells unreality… the real is more beautiful than the lofty unreal” (Nussbaum, 2013, p. 385). Love for the moral beauty in, say, respect for humanity makes the ideal “more than a shell,” it gives it life (Nussbaum, 2013, p. 15).

The encounter with the good is also experienced in an internal way, as a self in dialogue with itself, a space moral traditions would call conscience (Isaacs, 2007, p. 18). In inner conversations, the self draws on dialogues with absent others, present or past, which manifest in the form of contrapuntal “simultaneous voices,” as Gilligan et al. describe them (Gilligan, Spencer, Weinberg, & Bertsch, 2004, p. 159; Isaacs, 2007, p. 18). Thus, our inner encounters with the good may sometimes mean that we experience the encounter as one of tensions and regrets we cannot resolve (Isaacs, 2007, p. 18).

This is the space of the self in dialogue with itself. It is also the site of dialogical engagement with those others who are not physically present, but are present through voice and whose advice, admonitions, conversations and stories are remembered as significant, or esteemed or valued. (Isaacs, 2007, p. 18)

Our different encounters with the good are the background in which our becoming selves are situated and embedded, and it is in this context that our “narrative voice emerges and finds its meaning” (Isaacs, 2007, p. 14).
Cross-Cultural Considerations

Culture is deeply connected to ontology and identity construction. Cultural perspectives change over time, and each culture has its own ontological history. Broader social forces have significantly influenced cultural ontologies giving shape to their particular histories, and with increasing globalisation they now do so on a global scale. The global pollination of highly successful social practices by culturally diverse groups is now an increasingly common phenomenon, and moral education is also following this trend. Cross-cultural discourse is opening up to more diverse connections. Moral education discourse on the challenges of finding a united approach to moral plurality is greatly enriched and made fuller by such global trends. Particular cross-cultural opportunities, facilitated by global social forces, have given rise to this research project.

Ontology in Culture

An individual’s uniquely assembled self-interpretations are made possible “because the array of linguistic, intellectual, emotional and aesthetic resources available for interpreting oneself are furnished by one’s culture” (Abbey, 2000, p. 66). Culture is also a unique assemblage of beliefs and values about a moral form of life, with particular interpretations of the nature of the self and its embodiment, of the kinds of life that are meaningful, of what are good ways to be and act with others and the world, and of what constitutes flourishing. As a human being we are embedded in the “swarms of participations” (Massey, 2010, p. 52) that swirl and mix, coagulate and disperse, and which, through history, become identifiable as a particular culture. Embodiment in a particular environment and embeddedness in a particular history
also give shape to the particular cultural ontology that its ethnic groupings and social practices draw on for their ways of being and knowing (Abbey, 2000, p. 71). The social practices that exist within a culture also draw on this array of moral sources to realize their own purposes. The webs of interlocutors in relationships and engaged in social practices, in turn, provide powerful influences within and for a cultural group. The dynamic nature and condition of culture is unavoidable because of the interpretive and purposing features of its relationally embedded and interconnected members. Indeed, the expressions of the moral form of life in any given society or culture are at the core of its “cultural and social capital.”

A “rich” society is one which can provide for persons’ basic material needs, which can protect persons from harm, which can provide a social setting that is inclusive, affirming and harmonious, and which can provide enabling opportunities for persons’ purposive, relational, and creative capacities. In recent times a number of writers and social commentators have referred to such communal “riches” or “assets” as those of cultural and social capital. (Isaacs, 2009b, p. 9)

The modernity project is a long-running movement within Western cultures that developed in a cross-cultural exchange in Europe and English-speaking countries. Modernization is the current form of this historical and culturally embedded movement that now encompasses many more cultures. Taylor takes a cultural approach to explain the global phenomenon that recognises the new view of the self and the good underpinning modernization. Viewing the ontological dimension of cultures as they interact with the global forces of modernization allows for the possibility of understanding important differences that occur as elements of
modernity are embraced in diverse nations. Taylor points to the danger of unexamined ethnocentric interpretations for intercultural understanding:

As long as we leave Western notions of identity unexamined, we will fail to see how other cultures differ and how this difference crucially conditions the way in which they integrate the truly universal features of modernity. (C. Taylor, 1999, p. 161)

**Culture and Powerful Social Movements**

Social forces within a culture ensure its dynamism and vitality, and have a significant role to play in the survival of a culture. The modern Western cultural identity, Taylor explains, has been the result of many social practices from religious to political, familial to economic, intellectual to artistic, converging and reinforcing each other in ontological ways (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 206). In so doing, these practices have helped create a common space of understanding in which changes in self-understanding and ideas about the good have flourished in a particular way. Social forces within a culture can cause the spread of its particular way of viewing the world and acting within it to other peoples, which may or may not increase the vitality and strength of its cultural group. The practices of modernity for the West, namely military power, scientific and technological advancement, and economic practices, have propelled this particular culture outwards and across the globe, sometimes brutally imposing themselves on other cultures (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 207). As well as their transformational effect on the development of societies, they have also given a certain ontological prestige to particular self-understandings that they have contributed to, and been made possible by, having a fateful importance to the development of other cultures (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 207). The spread of Western
conceptions of the good self and the good life has been inextricably intertwined with the global spread of the English language medium, further contributing to these massive civilization pressures.

The modernization of the West has spread out to continue its modernizing trends across the globe, influencing the growth and nature of education systems, and spreading a dominant moral education approach. Values education researchers in Australia have given an example of these modernizing social forces influencing the development of education in their country, once a collection of colonies of the British Empire (Lovat, Dally, Clement, & Toomey, 2011, p. 227). Lovat et al. reflect on the current form of education systems, first established about a century and a half ago, to provide access to education for all children. They argue that it has been more influenced by social forces than responsive to student needs. The motivations of these social forces, they claim, have changed through the decades from “simply wanting children off the street,” to seeing schools as “sifters and sorters” to maintain a social inequality (Lovat et al., 2011, p. 227). More recently, these researchers note that an economic interpretation of education as preparing for a career, as well as an exploitation of economic concerns about educational testing and performance by political interests, have appeared. These educationalists fear that “any of these forces is capable of destroying education and most of those who enter its school system” (Lovat et al., 2011, p. 227).

Noddings (2007, p. 167), describing the dominant approach to moral education in American schools at the turn of the century, comments on its hegemonic spread. She describes The Character Development League as having the “explicit intention to inculcate 31 virtues that would culminate in a 32nd integral virtue—character,” and notes teachers were given clear direction on character development with specific
virtues being assigned to particular grades. This approach, readily accessible to American teachers, and ontologically synergistic with their worldview, rode out with the tide of modernization to other parts of the world. As Noddings notes, this method is still recognizable in moral education approaches in many other countries (Noddings, 2007, p. 167). Noddings contends it is not enough to inculcate virtues for authentic human liberation and social justice, which she believes can only be achieved by people in caring communities (Noddings, 2002b, p. 103).

Nussbaum identifies governments as having a significant role in shaping powerful social forces (Nussbaum, 2013). Governments do this is by stirring public emotion through numerous strategies such as “public artworks, monuments and parks, through the construction of festivals and celebrations, through songs, symbols, official films and photographs, through the structure of public education, through other types of public discussions, through the public use of humor and comedy, even by shaping the public role of sports” (Nussbaum, 2013, p. 203). In her critical treatment of the liberal ideal, she identifies grief and disgust as two disturbing emotions that need to be channelled, the former to promote reciprocity and extended compassion, and the latter to be contained by delighting in reciprocity (Nussbaum, 2013, p. 201). Viewing the inherent moral concern in the liberal ideal, she comes to recognize that “fear, envy and shame need theoretical analysis before we can understand how they might be managed” (Nussbaum, 2013, p. 202). In her closer examination of the liberal ideal, she sees that the public emotions of love, respect and extended compassion have vital roles in an aspiration of justice when combined with an enhanced liberal freedom, much as Walker’s expressive-collaborative model of morality suggests (Nussbaum, 2013, p. 203; Walker, 1993, 2007).
Cross-Cultural Discourse and Practical Reason

“Modernization” has facilitated global interconnectivity and opportunities for cross-cultural dialogue. Taylor suggests that cross-cultural dialogue enables people of different cultures to understand each other and to recognize how they differ (Abbey, 2000, p. 68). Taylor explains that a fusion of horizons is a possible positive outcome of shared articulations that are still open to further fusion with other horizons.

Suppose a group of Christian and Muslim scholars with great effort and ecumenical understanding elaborated a language in which their differences could be undistortively expressed, to the satisfaction of both sides. This would still not be an objective, point-of-view-less language or religion. The effort would have to be started all over again if either wanted to reach an understanding with Buddhists, for instance. (C. Taylor, 1995, p. 151)

A kind of practical reasoning goes on in such conversations, as culturally diverse people compare, question, articulate and re-articulate views to reconcile differences, acknowledge what is better, or perhaps establish a new and shared understanding that makes sense to each. Abbey enumerates a cluster of possible intellectual virtues that Taylor presupposes for such a fusion of horizons to occur. These include a willingness to know the other, not dismissing the strange, respecting difference, openness to change, and courageous questioning of personal assumptions (Abbey, 2000, p. 163).  

This particular research project spans a number of different cultures: the researcher, a New Zealand teacher, gained moral education teacher training experience in Papua New Guinea, undertook research work at an Australian university that explored a North American moral education program and how it was experienced in a Mongolian school. The cluster of “intellectual virtues” Abbey suggests are presupposed by Taylor are similar to the moral intuitions informing the “doing” of this study.
The challenges in moral pluralism, claims Taylor, are overcome in a condition of inclusiveness that allows the other to “be” through a broader understanding, and which allows the respectful articulation of comparisons or contrasts using a shared language of moral understandings. The initial point of contact, when all is “strange and bewildering,” could be when “we find a way of placing the strange practice as corresponding to one (some) of ours” (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 43). Just as individuals are better able to come to know their own selves through articulation of their moral understandings in dialogue, so too are cultures enriched through articulation in cross-cultural discourses of the type described by Taylor. The expressive-collaborative model offered by Margaret Urban Walker (Walker, 1993, pp. 36-37; 2007, pp. 67-69) describes this discourse as leading to moral negotiation and moral accountability.

Cross-cultural discourse has historically often been marked by the influence of powerful forces and perhaps not easily interpreted as discourse of any kind. The ethics of power at play in such instances or movements have been of the negative kind, as the exploitation of slavery illustrates, or the subjugation of indigenous peoples and cultures entails. But cross-cultural discourse can also be positive and is indicative of integrative power between diverse peoples in many different practices, including moral education. An example where a fusion of horizons occurs, in the contrastive sense Taylor outlines, is the Asia Pacific Network of Moral Education, which brings together researchers and practitioners from the culturally, historically, politically, geographically and spiritually diverse Asia Pacific region. This network of interlocutors appears to have expressive-collaborative aims and understandings of cross-cultural dialogue. Its members are not blind to the benefits and constraints of the “modernizing” civilization forces that have both enabled their cross-cultural
interaction and challenge their negotiation of shared understandings in the culturally foreign English language medium.

**The Possibility of a Basic Universal Morality that Embraces Moral Pluralism**

The modern self in Western liberal democratic societies, for which Taylor has retrieved its historical and culturally embedded sources, is faced with a moral quest to create a believable, or more believable, moral framework. The moral engagement this modern self has with the world can be seen to have three layers in the range of moral goods available to it. The first is comprised of what Taylor argues are three fundamental conceptions around which moral goods revolve, particularly in our modern day context. These he calls axes of moral thinking. The first is to do with our sense of respect and duty to others, an axis that commonly defines modern English-speaking understandings of morality and which include

moral beliefs which cluster around the sense that human life is to be respected and that the prohibitions and obligations which this imposes on us are among the most weighty and serious in our lives. (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 14)

Taylor sees a second aspect of our modern lives having to do with how we are going to live our lives, that is, our notions of a full life (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 14). This aspect demands our strong evaluations, which Taylor argues has broadened the scope of morality for us.

There are questions about how I am going to live my life which touch on the issue of what kind of life is worth living, or what kind of life would fulfill the promise implicit in my particular talents, or the demands incumbent on someone with my endowment, or of what constitutes a rich, meaningful life . . . (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 14)
Along with these two axes of moral thinking, Taylor recognises a third axis that has to do with notions of human dignity.

There is also the range of notions concerned with dignity. By this I mean the characteristics by which we think of ourselves as commanding (or failing to command) the respect of those around us . . . (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 15)

Taylor claims that these three axes exist in all cultures, though the moral goods clustering around them, and the ranking of these clusters, may be quite diverse from that of other cultures.

Something like these three axes exists in every culture. But there are great differences in how they are conceived, how they relate, and in their relative importance. (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 16)

Taylor notes there is an important boundary between the demands of truly universal validity and those of the good life that differ from culture to culture (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 88). This takes us to the second layer of moral goods available to us, that of cultural goods. These cultural goods furnish for those of us within a culture more specific understandings of what might constitute respect for others, a meaningful life and human dignity. Today there are those who may hold fast to their traditional view, and, in the face of moral pluralism, feel others are drifting away from their cultural roots, or as standing against them. Others might hold that their traditional view is one view amongst many, right for them but not necessarily obligatory for others (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 17).

There is a third layer that has become available to those in modern liberal democratic societies because a space has been opened up to admire and find worth in “improvisation, critical independence, and quirky individuality” (Nussbaum, 2013, p. 200). This is perhaps one of the fundamental moral purposes of the liberal
democratic ideal, to give each person the power of choice in moral valuing and interpretation. Though more traditional cultures may provide more limited opportunities to make such personal moral interpretations, this layer is made more available in modern societies due to increased economic wealth, national security, access to better health care and education, cross-cultural opportunities and having access to just and dignified treatment under law. The cross-cultural opportunities of globalization combined with the layer of personal engagements that make life worthy, such as exploration in the arts or recreational activities and so on, adds greater complexity to the array of moral goods open to the modern self. It gives many a sense that they are on a quest to make sense of the world and their place in it. They seek this in one tradition, in various combinations of several traditions, or in their own interpretations or those of others that have been derived from multiple sources and practices (Isaacs, 2010, pp. 125-126; C. Taylor, 1989, p. 17).

There is another sense in which we experience moral pluralism: as historically and culturally embedded human beings. Whatever our embedded particularities, there is a core for understanding the self and the good life around which cultural and personal moral goods are focused: respect for others, a meaningful life and the dignity of human being (C. Taylor, 1989, pp. 14-15). It is this kind of moral content that can, and does, exist in the public arena. They underpin the noble moral goals and aspirations that Nussbaum has identified as characteristic of liberal democratic societies, such as “inclusiveness, equality, the relief of misery, [and] the end of slavery” (Nussbaum, 2013, p. 2).

Taylor’s three axes of moral thinking can also meet the needs of making sense of moral pluralism. These three axes meet Nussbaum’s requirements for an “overlapping consensus among people who have many different religious and secular
views of life,” because they do not make any “claims about what is ultimately worthwhile in life” (Nussbaum, 2013, p. 392). Recognizing that these axes are core to our moral thinking may help foster the public emotions that Nussbaum considers are essential for true justice in societies, namely “compassion for loss, anger at injustice, the limiting of envy and disgust in favor of inclusive sympathy” (Nussbaum, 2013, p. 2).

Nussbaum underscores the need for education to begin with linking love “to good values that can become, later on, a basis for criticizing bad values” (Nussbaum, 2013, p. 250). Taylor’s goal in articulating the historical and cultural dimensions in which the modern self is embedded is to retrieve and “uncover buried goods through rearticulation—and thereby to make these sources again empower, to bring the air again into the half-collapsed lungs of the spirit” (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 520). His aim is similar to Nussbaum’s, to foster love for moral sources and noble moral ideals. Taylor would transform the logic that because we are unfairly treated we can strike out to renounce victimhood “in the name of a new kind of common world” (C. Taylor, 2011, p. 211). Taylor’s three axes form a basic universal morality that embraces moral pluralism because they are each an axis around which moral thinking clusters. They serve as the point of “contact unity” that creates that initial fusion of horizons that Taylor talks about for making cross-cultural dialogue possible and building flourishing relationships and communities (Abbey, 2000, p. 68; C. Taylor, 1989, pp. 14-15).
Summary

Morality and ethical concerns in the English-speaking tradition have long been considered as having to do with questions about “what is right to do”. The Tayloaran framework assumes a broader basis for the conceptualization of morality and ethics and is more concerned with “what it is good to be”. Human beings exist in a space of moral and spiritual questions concerning the self, the moral form of life, and moral engagement. Taylor’s philosophical anthropology brings to light several important ontological features of the self that enable and constrain different ways of being: interpretation and self-interpretation; having purposes; having a language; grasping our lives in narrative; dialogical engagement; relational embeddedness; material embodiment; and, the human condition of vulnerability.

The account of the moral form of life drawn from Taylor’s phenomenological philosophical perspective recognizes the shared common space, replete with moral plurality, which provides moral understandings to, and is provided moral understandings by, the many moral selves in their webs of interlocution and as embedded in many particular histories and cultures. Through the strong evaluation of these moral goods, a person inescapably exists within a moral framework that implicitly or explicitly draws on moral sources, which may be plural even within one culture. The continual struggle to achieve clarity and coherence in one’s moral framework can be seen as a moral quest to make sense of moral plurality. The self as relationally embedded is engaged in many social practices and its moral flourishing is made possible by the together goods shared within and amongst these webs of interlocutors. The shared nature of moral space presents the self with the problematic of moral pluralism, which Taylor suggests is possibly transcended by the practice of
practical reason. Practical reason, more broadly and in cross-cultural situations, requires articulation of moral horizons, which necessarily involves the historical retrieval of the moral sources, origins and development of our modern outlooks and those of other cultures and peoples.

Moral life is experienced through moral engagement, which has historical and cultural dimensions, needs to recognize particular identities and dispositions, has deliberative and decision-making components, and has various strategies for change that effect some kind of transformation, positive or negative. There are issues of power and vulnerability within relationships and social practices, which, when the dimensions of engagement are articulated, reveal the undercurrents of moral understandings and potentially contribute to transformative strategies for change. Moral engagement, when seen as an expressive-collaborative space promotes dignity, respect, and the creation of shared meaning.

The phenomenological account of the self as an actor who is embodied, embedded self-interpretive, and yet fragile and vulnerable, provides a rich ontological framework for understanding the moral form of life. (Isaacs, 2009b, p. 9)

Viewed from the Tayloren framework, culture includes ontological interpretations of the nature of the moral and spiritual space shared by its members in various ways. Powerful social forces are involved in dynamically shaping and re-shaping the identity of culture and civilizations. These have also enabled an expansion of cross-cultural discourse, which, when perceived as an expressive-collaborative engagement, enables the understanding of the myriad moral horizons that may exist and the orientations of others within the discourse, though not necessarily leading to all making the same strong evaluations.
The account of ontology and ethics expressed in this chapter can be seen as contributing to the ongoing dialogue in moral education. This account “invites us to see moral values and moral engagements as resonating with a phenomenological account of what it is to be human” (Isaacs, 2009b, p. 12). Professional practices, including those of moral education, can be enriched by the articulation of their moral horizons, how they are constituted by understandings of human nature and the moral form of life, and anchored by constitutive and together values. Through its articulation and its application as a lens to understand moral education experiences, this account invites us to explore the ethical integrity, or coherence, of moral education research and practice. Ethics is about the moral flourishing of human beings and their communities. It is enhanced by giving attention to anthropological features of the self, human embodiment and embeddedness, and a phenomenological account of the moral form of life that includes where we stand, our being and becoming, our engagement with others, and the living of a full life (Isaacs, 2009b, p. 12). Ethical inquiry oriented in this way could enhance research in moral education and potentially transform moral education engagements.

This chapter concludes Part A. The Virtues Project has been introduced and both the nature of research conducted on it and the academic discussion about it have been reviewed. The features of human nature and the dimensions of the moral form of life, including moral engagement and cross-cultural considerations, which underpin this exploration of The Virtues Project, have been presented. Part B is the exploration of The Virtues Project.
Part B:

Exploring The Virtues Project
Overview

The second part of the thesis is an exploration of three dimensions of The Virtues Project from the perspective of the Taylorean framework. The exploration is shaped by the three research questions asked in Chapter One.

1. How may there be a resonance between The Virtues Project and the moral form of life as articulated in the Taylorean account?

Chapter Four explores the coherence of the Virtues Project’s tacit ontological and ethical assumptions and appraises to what extent this resonates with Taylor’s account of the moral form of life and its ontological features.

2. How feasible is it for The Virtues Project to be realized in a school context, given that it was originally a family program?

Chapter Six explores the educational coherence of The Virtues Project to enhance moral flourishing as a family-based program translated into a school setting.

3. How might The Virtues Project resonate with a Mongolian cultural context dissimilar to the North American cultural context of its development?

Chapter Eight explores the cross-cultural resonance of The Virtues Project in a Mongolian context. In a rapidly integrating globalised world, Western moral education programs are easily making their way into culturally diverse locations, but the problematic of moral plurality and divergent moral sources may result in a disconnection in a cross-cultural moral education experience.

However, to fully explore Chapters Six and Eight a narrative case study is required, and Chapter Five explains the methodology and analysis of this case study.
Furthermore, Chapter Eight requires an understanding of the Mongolian people, their way of life and the origins of their nomadic moral horizons. Chapter Seven provides this in its articulation of Mongolian culture and history to retrieve conceptions of the self and the moral form of life embedded in the modern Mongolian.
Chapter 4: Implicit Ontological and Ethical Conceptions Within The Virtues Project

Introduction

Part B explores the Virtues Project’s ontological and ethical conceptions, recognizing it as a moral education program from a Western “modern” context. Taylor’s ontological views are applied here to deeply explore the ways in which The Virtues Project, embedded in a Western context and yet conceived outside of the moral education practice in schools, conceptualises the self and the moral form of life. This chapter draws out and articulates the Virtues Project’s implicit ontological and ethical features in the light of the conceptual framework of the previous chapter.

The exploration of the expanded and integrated dimensions of Taylor’s account of the moral form of life resonating implicitly in The Virtues Project are a complex articulation. The challenge of this kind of articulation is that the dimensions of the nature of the self, the moral form of life and moral engagement, particularly within our Western intellectual and cultural traditions, remain largely hidden. Taylor explains that ordinarily we draw on familiar moral understandings, which, initially at least, give us a restricted view and advocates a more in depth exploration of the latency and complexity of background contexts (Abbey, 2000, p. 46; C. Taylor, 1989, p. 9). For this reason Chapters Three and Four require a higher order of thinking to achieve something close to the Taylorent standard for articulation. To
assist the reader through these potential difficulties in Chapter Four a schematic outline of features in The Virtues Project is supplied in Appendix C.

**Conceptions of the Self in The Virtues Project**

Taylor’s philosophical anthropology uncovered many of the perennial and universal features of the self. The strategies of The Virtues Project are explored here from Taylor’s viewpoint. The Virtues Project directs its strategies to the space of moral and spiritual questions about who it is good to be. Who it is good to be is interpreted as someone who practices virtues in their everyday life.

**Interpretations and Self-Interpretations**

Taylor states that we have an inner interpretive capacity to make sense of, and give meaning to, what we experience in the outer physical reality (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 111). The Virtues Project virtues language is a language tool for giving expression to our inner interpretations that make sense of what someone has done, is doing and might do. It is an articulated interpretation of a lived experience narrated in the light of virtues practice. The ethical feature, or virtue, interpreted in the action observed is named—such as perseverance, creativity, trustworthiness and so on. The virtue becomes the ethical focus of the interpreted action and locates the interpreter in a space of moral and spiritual issues to make sense of, and give value to, lived experience.

We are constantly interpreting and reinterpreting our world to make sense of it and our place in it. These are reflections and evaluations of our experiences that Isaacs argues lead to the transformation of our identity (Isaacs, 2009b, p. 2). The five
strategies are tools that provide everyday opportunities to consciously connect the physical experience with the interpretive engagement in the space of moral and spiritual issues that Taylor identifies (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 4). There is an implicit recognition of Taylor’s assertion that “the self’s interpretations can never be fully explicit” (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 34). The moment in which virtues language can be applied is when a particular event of virtues practice has been observed. The virtues language in that moment, whether as an acknowledgment, guide or correction, is about a facet of the virtue as exemplified in the moment of action. Virtues language is not a one-time thing. It is applied in many moments of virtues practice, for a particular virtue and for many different virtues.

The refining, revising or rejecting of interpretations of the virtues, and our identity as people who practice virtues, goes on as we speak virtues language and hear it spoken to us. A change in our self-interpretations, as Abbey explains Taylor’s view, comes to transform how we talk about ourselves and the world around us and therefore changes us as “both the interpreter and the interpreted” (Abbey, 2000, p. 59). In the case of the teacher-student relationship, Kavelin-Popov claims that the teacher’s language used to “invite positive behaviour” has its greatest impact when it is linked to a virtue because it engages the moral and spiritual awareness in the student (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 9). The self’s interpretive capacity in both giving and receiving virtues language is also recommended for adults. Kavelin-Popov claims that “when school administrators conduct themselves in this way, it has a powerful effect on staff, students, parents, and the community” (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 13).

Taylor asserts that even when a self-interpretation may be less than adequate, less than truthful or even self-deluding, it is still a crucial feature of identity (Abbey,
The Virtues Project strategies provide ongoing self-evaluation of virtues interpretation and practice through which strong and positive identity might be established (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 36). The virtues sharing circle activity gives an opportunity for students to reflect “on the practice of a virtue in their own lives” (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 96). Virtues language brings virtues focus to the everyday contexts of virtues practice. Teachable moments take note of particular virtues practice in the moment. A virtues-based boundary provides the space to reflect on the application of a virtue in particular contexts. Honouring the spirit allows for the appreciation and celebration of virtues practiced by a person or group in particular contexts and points in time. Spiritual companioning gives space to reflective thinking on a virtue and its relevance to a moral plight or predicament for a person.

**Being and Becoming**

One of the Virtues Project foundational understandings is that the virtues exist in potential within each person, and that the capacity for practicing the virtues needs awakening and mastery (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. xv). Awakening and mastery are suggestive of becoming, that is, awake to becoming a person who practices virtues and gains mastery of them in practice. According to Isaacs, we have “an endless capacity to create and re-create” ourselves (Isaacs, 2007, p. 4). The Virtues Project talks about this endless kind of mastery of the virtues. The virtues language, for example, is best shared in teachable moments. The opportunities for appreciating the practice of virtues are ongoing, as are the opportunities for virtues practice. Each opportunity is not quite the same as another, making the self’s creation and re-creation ongoing. The Virtues Project claims the effect of the practice of the five
strategies can transform people—for example, transforming bullies into leaders (Virtues Project International Association, n.d.-b).

Mastery of virtues practice requires recognition of “strength virtues” and “growth virtues,” which can be different for divergent moral issues (Virtues Project International Association, n.d.-c). The conceptualization of the growth of virtues, explains Kavelin-Popov, is to aid the teacher in identifying the progress of learning within the child (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 31). Using a combination of virtues language and teachable moments, children are given opportunities to reflect on their practice of the virtues and what they might do differently next time or in different situations (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. xxiv). Taylor maintains that we have a sense of our selves as growing and becoming “through the history of my maturations and regressions, overcomings and defeats,” because we want “to grow towards some fullness” (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 50). “Fullness” is interpreted in The Virtues Project as mastery of the virtues in practice.

Noddings claims that “selves are not born” and the goal of education is growth towards responses that enhance the caring self (Bergman, 2004, p. 154; Noddings, 2002b, p. 98). Similar to Noddings, Kavelin-Popov explains that the process of awakening the virtues within the child requires caring educative interaction with others (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. xxii). Noddings’ notions of modelling, dialogue, practice and confirmation, that she argues enhance the caring self, are reflected in virtues practice and language to help people “to remember who they really are and to live by their highest values” (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2005, pp. Promotion-1; Noddings, 2002a). Kavelin-Popov’s advice is to start with a few virtues and proceed “step by step, adding the more unfamiliar ones gradually” (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2005, pp. Workshops-35). Cultivating virtues, she maintains, is “age appropriate from the
The meaning behind the idea of teachers modelling virtues is not one of demonstrating perfection, rather Kavelin-Popov suggests that teachers are “accountable to the same vision statement everyone has agreed to,” and need to “be willing to keep learning and growing” (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 83). The application of the strategies, it is envisioned, will “turn our children and our schools around” (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2005, pp. Workshops-64).

**Purposes**

Taylor argues that purposes play a role in structuring self-interpretations and therefore identity (Abbey, 2000, p. 65). The purpose of life, states Kavelin-Popov, is to have a life of purpose and to develop all the virtues (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. xix; 2005, pp. Promotion-16). She refers to a study from the Harvard Center for Moral Education¹¹ that asked imprisoned youth why they had committed violence and that found it was due to boredom, which she describes as a “spiritual disease—the disease of meaninglessness” (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. xviii). The void of meaninglessness, she contends, needs to be filled with the meaningfulness of virtues recognition and practice (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2005, pp. Workshops-46). Virtues are the purpose, or intention, underpinning our actions and interactions. Virtues language, setting clear boundaries and spiritual companioning are tools to clarify, sustain, mend and possibly alter purposes for narrating and practicing interpreters.

Interpreting the purpose in a person’s actions is an avenue for coming to understand someone and to know who they are (Abbey, 2000, pp. 64-65). Virtues

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¹¹ Lawrence Kohlberg founded the Harvard Center for Moral Education and was director for two decades before his passing in 1988 (Walsh, 2000). The study referred to by Kavelin-Popov was not fully referenced.
language, then, is a tool for understanding the moral identity of a person. The intention of meaningful action, according to Kavelin-Popov, is a reflection of one of the virtues, which recognised in a student’s actions through virtues language “awakens the moral purpose” (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, pp. 9, 10, 29). Virtues language reminds, encourages and reinforces virtues understanding and practice in students by engaging them in listening for the intentions behind their actions. Virtues language can also be used by teachers to redirect a student’s awareness to mastery of an appropriate virtue for that situation (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 65).

Virtues Project International states that it seeks to complement rather than compete with other moral education approaches (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2005, pp. Resources-7). One of the contributors to the Leaders’ Manual of The Virtues Project, Bryn-Jones, describes the strategies as life skills with the purpose of giving “people of all cultures” access to “the knowledge and practice of virtues,” and to “help schools and communities to build a climate of safety and caring” (as cited inL. Kavelin-Popov, 2005, pp. Promotion-7). This aligns with Nussbaum’s view that purposes can be shared in a collaborative way to bring about changes in society (Nussbaum, 2013, p. 385). The Virtues Project seeks to create a movement of virtues awareness and practice in communities to improve society.

**Language**

Language is recognized in Taylor’s account as a creative and expressive good, and the medium through which moral being and becoming is mediated (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 57). Kavelin-Popov agrees when she makes the claim that “language is the vehicle for meaning” (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 3). Virtues language facilitates the conceptualization of virtues and their translation into practice, which is intended to
awaken the spiritual nature of the individual (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 3). Virtues language is understood to be fundamental to creating a culture of character, whether in the home, at school or in the workplace, and is a crucial component in the formation of the strategies (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 3). The simplicity of this strategy is that it flows within the conversations during and about the ordinary moments of the day. The Virtues Project works with the same notion as Taylor and Nussbaum, that meaning can be expressed in wider terms than language (Abbey, 2000, p. 67; Nussbaum, 2013, p. 402). The wider definition of language includes the use of the visual and performing arts in expressing virtues for, with and by students to provide more varied ways to build virtues understanding (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 90).

The term “virtues” has a critical meaning for the understanding of the Virtues Project’s purposes and responses. Virtues, for instance, are distinguished from “values” because virtues, claim the founders, are valued universally by all cultures and are then culturally interpreted into various forms of behaviour (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. xix; 2005, pp. Workshops-5). Virtues are, therefore, considered to be more “elemental” than values (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. xix).

The virtues terms, which are irreducible for making sense of our lives, according to Taylor (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 57), are also considered by The Virtues Project to be irreducible in making sense of diversity in cultures. Kavelin-Popov illustrates with an example involving the perspectives of Japanese and America soldiers of the virtue of courage when captured by the enemy. While the Japanese valued suicide as the expression of courage, Americans valued endurance until release or escape as courage, and, further, each interpreted the actions of the other as cowardice (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2005, pp. Workshops-5). The broader cultural and
historical contexts in which courage was valued for the Japanese and American soldiers were entirely different. One can imagine both kinds of soldiers had to stay strong in the face of their own fear of either dying or living in these difficult circumstances. It is the quality of staying strong even in the face of fear that is the elemental nature of the virtue of courage that is recognized here.

**Narrative**

Taylor contends “that we grasp our lives in a narrative” and seek a coherent narrative to make sense and meaning of our lives (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 47). Narrative is an essential feature in the strategies of The Virtues Project. The virtues language strategy is a narrative, a micro-story of someone practicing a virtue in a very specific context. Kavelin-Popov gives an example of a virtues acknowledgement: “It was kind of you to show our new student where to sit. I’m sure it made him feel welcome,” (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 8). This has the essential features of narrative. It has narrative plausibility because the ethical feature, the virtue, is the intention behind the action being narrated. The character in the virtues narrative, the person receiving the acknowledgement, knows immediately if the story makes sense for him or her. If the virtue being recognised is meaningful there is a responsive feeling of worthiness, and a point of unity of understanding between the narrator and the actor is established.

The teachable moment strategy focuses on the everyday moments, promoting the narrating of virtues in practice in the everyday, which lends itself to creating a unity of purpose and direction in a life (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 30). The restorative justice approach in the strategy, focused on setting virtues-based boundaries, requires listening to the student’s narrative of a disciplinary incident or
situation (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 65). The sharing of personal narratives to awaken a sense of meaning is encouraged in the strategy of honouring the spirit (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 88). The companioning strategy is understood as “an empowering way to meet the needs… to tell our stories and have them valued” (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 110). An activity suggestion for the classroom is to “story-together” by picking a virtue and having a student tell her or his narrative of a time she or he practiced this virtue (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 90). Narrative is highly valued in The Virtues Project because stories are understood to be “the keepers of meaning” (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 107).

**Dialogical Engagement**

Language “always reaches beyond the self to posit in another conversation” (Abbey, 2000, p. 69). The overarching strategy of virtues language posits the moral interpretations of the narrator in virtues terms in conversation with the actor practicing these virtues. An intended outcome of virtues language is to stimulate sharing about virtues to make them a vocal part of the dialogical engagement of human beings (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 83). The critical use of open-ended questions in the teachable moments strategy links virtues practice with the dialogical engagement that seeks to make sense of moral life and moral identity (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 39). The spiritual companioning strategy is a dialogical engagement focused on navigating the space of questions in the context of a particular moral issue about “who it is good to be and what is worthy of love,” as Taylor describes the broader morality (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 4).

Taylor argues that dialogical relations with others is pivotal for identity (C. Taylor, 1995, p. 231). The Virtues Project makes the distinction between
empowering and demoralizing language, explaining that demoralizing language negatively impacts on identity and confidence, whereas virtues language is empowering and creates strong and positive identity (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 36). Taylor goes further to claim that a self only exists in “webs of interlocution” (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 36). Kavelin-Popov would call these webs of interlocution “safety nets” for students, which, when “focused on positive virtues in the behaviour of the student,” builds strong communities (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. xvii).

Taylor understands that the language of our moral and spiritual intuitions within webs of interlocution becomes the shared moral space and the grounds for divergence (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 35). The Virtues Project anticipates that the one speaking virtues language is not the only one becoming engaged in the space of ethical issues. In spiritual companioning, a caring person engages in conversation with a person grappling with concerns of a moral and ethical nature to “ask questions that lead them to their own answers,” using virtues terms and understandings (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 114).

Over time, narrative voices in a community would tell the story of the flourishing of virtues understanding and practice. People in the midst of a community using the virtues language would remember many micro-stories in the acknowledgements given and received. In this way, a narrative understanding of virtues is built on the interpretations of many others in many different situations.

**Relational Embeddedness**

Taylor insists that we develop our understandings in the nexus of our thoughts and responses and others’ thoughts and reactions because we are relationally embedded (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 37). The strategies of The Virtues Project are
relationally embedded. Students find their voice in dialogical relationships with their teachers as they relate to each other through virtues language and with each other. They learn to share their moral interpretations in virtues terms in teachable moments, to reflect on and refine their moral responses in relation to virtues-based boundaries and spiritual companionship, and to join in celebrating moral flourishing in honouring the spirit. In this way, students come to add their own narrative to the narratives of others in the way that Isaacs describes for rich and highly complex networks of relationships (Isaacs, 2007, p. 10). For Kavelin-Popov, it is a means to preventing violence because “an atmosphere of inclusive friendliness, mutual trust, caring, and kindness” is developed (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 58).

The Virtues Project draws on moral understandings historically and culturally embedded in diverse cultures by giving focus to the virtues, which Kavelin-Popov states are the “silver thread” running through “the sacred texts of the world’s religions” (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2005, pp. Introduction-19). There is an implicit acceptance of the diverse ways in which virtues can be interpreted in practice in the open-endedness of virtues language. Kavelin-Popov appears to be referring to the historically and culturally embedded self when she claims that naming a virtue observed in a person’s everyday actions “resonates with her deepest self” (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 8).

Isaacs points out that we derive emotional fulfilment from our relational webs (Isaacs, 2009b, p. 4). When experiencing disruption in the social world, such as Isaacs’ examples of trauma, alienation, loneliness and despair, The Virtues Project offers the tool of spiritual companionship as a source of empowerment (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 110). Taylor argues that “a self can never be described without reference to those who surround it” (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 35). The honouring the spirit
strategy is a way of acknowledging and celebrating this relational embeddedness in
the moral space of issues and questions, which in a school might manifest as school
spirit and be enshrined in the shared vision of a class or whole school (L. Kavelin-
Popov, 2000, p. 85). Taylor appreciates that our identities are “always in dialogue
with, sometimes in struggle against, the identities our significant others want to
recognize in us” (C. Taylor, 1991, p. 37). As one school in New Zealand described
the restorative justice component of the setting clear boundaries strategy,
“Restorative Justice is all about the importance of RELATIONSHIPS—the
maintaining, building, restoring, re negotiating” (Frankton Primary School,
n.d.capitals in original) [emphasis added].

Noddings makes the claim that a teacher’s greatest obligation is to nurture the
ethical ideal of others (Noddings, 1984, p. 49). The Virtues Project agrees with this
sentiment in the way its practice of virtues acknowledgements is similar to
Noddings’ component of confirmation in her care ethics approach to moral
education. Confirmation, Noddings explains, “requires attribution of the best
possible motive consonant with reality” (Noddings, 1992, p. 25). A virtues
acknowledgement attributes the best possible motive, a virtue, to the reality of action.
Noddings further states that “confirmation cannot be done by formula” because “a
relation of trust must ground it” (Noddings, 1992, p. 26). Virtues language has a
structure, but it is open to creative expression and therefore not formulaic.

**Material Embodiment**

Merleau-Ponty explains “for us the body is … our expression in the world, the
visible form of our intentions” (Merleau-Ponty, 1964, p. 5). Virtues practice is the
material embodiment of virtues, which virtues language brings to light. Virtues
language is focused on giving voice to moral interpretations and opening up dialogical moral space, and it does this by focusing on virtues in practice. The physical embodiment of virtues is linked with a dialogical moral space through virtues language, the narration of the virtues in action. Though interpretations may seem erroneous or distorted in comparison to others, Taylor states different perspectives still have plausibility as a different way of knowing by diversely engaged and embodied beings (Abbey, 2000, p. 186). Virtues acknowledgements are an appreciation of the different ways in which virtues can be practiced and interpreted in action. This highlights a potential quality of virtues language to mediate what Isaacs calls “cross-cultural and universal human understandings” between embodied beings (Isaacs, 2009b, p. 3).

Our material embodiment has us perceiving the moral terrain in a topographical way (C. Taylor, 1988, p. 301). The virtues language strategy is strongly influenced by the concept of the “Four Medicines” of a community of First Nations in northern Canada, who were the first community to engage with the emergent Virtues Project strategies. Kavelin-Popov explains the Four Medicines—the physical powers to see, hear, speak and act—are a frame of “reverence” for virtues language, which sees the virtues in others, hears others with kindness, compassion and justice, speaks with the power of the virtues, and acts with virtue (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 4). A pivotal understanding of the kind of relationship necessary for the spiritual companioning strategy was interpreted by a First Nations mother as “walk along,” a material metaphor Kavelin-Popov adopts to understand spiritual companioning as “walking along with another, not pushing or pulling them, but being present” (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 109).
Material metaphors anchor moral meaning in our material embodiment (C. Taylor, 1995, p. 84). Kavelin-Popov uses numerous material metaphors to convey moral understandings in The Virtues Project. An example metaphor about natural growth is used to explain how moral development occurs:

[People] can be likened to a seed which contains within it everything needed for the entire plant to grow and bear fruit. Just as this small seed I have in my hand will, with the right conditions for its nourishment, flourish into the complete and perfect plant so will a person, given the right spiritual, emotional, physical and intellectual encouragement and understanding, grow to be a personification of the highest qualities of character, which I am calling virtues. (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2005, pp. Workshops-4, 5) [emphasis added]

The physical reality of sleeping and waking is reflected in the conceptualizing of educative purpose. For example, “the purpose of a true educator . . . is to awaken the virtues that already exist within the child” (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, pp. xix-xx), and “a virtues correction… awakens moral purpose” (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 9). The embodiment of positioning in a landscape is reflected in these examples of language in the space of moral issues: “discipline is not teacher-centered but virtues-centered” (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 86); “companioning… is solution-oriented rather than blame-oriented” (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 121); “this spreads the virtues-oriented mentorship you are providing” (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 40); “[Vision Statements] serve as a reference point for daily Teachable Moments” (L.
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Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 86); and for “[people] to remember who they really are and to live by their highest values” (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2005, pp. Promotion-1).\textsuperscript{12}

Taylor proposes that we experience knowing in a range of ways, from the unreflective to the highly abstract and all in between, none of which are closed to doubt, error and correction, except that we are always engaged as intentional, embodied beings (Abbey, 2000, p. 185). The Virtues Project uses material metaphors in its explanations, which may assist in its global appeal.

\textit{Vulnerability}

As human beings we are not only vulnerable to the power of nature, explains Isaacs, we are also vulnerable to the power of others who might contain, exploit, violate or destroy us (Isaacs, 2007, p. 16). The founders express alarm regarding violence in supposedly peaceful societies, particularly towards and amongst children and youth in families and schools (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. xviii; 2005, pp. Workshops-10, 45, 62). They make sense of the rising youth violence in American schools from their standpoint that “people were created inherently good” (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2005, pp. Workshops-10). Their backgrounds of psychotherapy and paediatric psychology give Kavelin-Popov and Popov reasons to conclude that violence amongst youth is about a loss of meaning and purpose in life (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. xviii; 2005, pp. Promotion-1; Workshops-10). For them vulnerability is both a physical and a moral and spiritual issue (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2005, pp. Introduction-19). Their solution is in the realm of psychological strengthening and protection. Their assertion that virtues play a clear role in relationships and are “a strong preventative of violence” underpins their declaration that the five strategies

\textsuperscript{12} The italicized emphasis of particular words in this paragraph has been added.
transform “violence into virtues” (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2005, pp. Promotion-2, 5).
Language, says Kavelin-Popov, has “great influence to empower or discourage” (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. xxiv) and “shapes the self-esteem of our children” (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 3). She maintains that when the virtues are identified in students “their eyes light up in recognition—of their own value” (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 4). The objective of acknowledging virtues, she adds, is to “build authentic self-esteem” in others (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 5).

Nussbaum suggests that our frailties can be overcome through the development of our “excellences” of love and extended compassion that defeat the narcissistic tendencies leading to violence (Nussbaum, 2013, pp. 113-114). Excellences are recognized in The Virtues Project as virtues to be acknowledged and practiced. Frailties are recognized as the need for a virtue to be developed. To Nussbaum’s list of excellences The Virtues Project would add all the other virtues, which, it contends, are all needed not only to overcome frailties but also to have a meaningful life and flourishing moral engagements (Virtues Project International Association, n.d.-a).

Taylor notes modern liberal democracies, which strive to provide security and freedom of expression to all, can and do perpetrate violence towards those who violate the liberal democratic moral order (C. Taylor, 2011). Noddings agrees there is a need to include notions of evil in our moral understandings, and Nussbaum suggests that we recognize and research the darker forces in human personalities that are obstacles to reciprocity and equal concern (Noddings, 1989, p. 120; Nussbaum, 2013, pp. 113-114). The Virtues Project does not specifically articulate a morality of evil, but does implicitly acknowledge a particular notion of evil and the darker forces
in human personalities. Evil or darker forces are understood as something that is
developed just as virtues develop.

If you fill a home, a school or an office with words like lazy, stupid and bad,
that is the behavior which follows, but if you use words such as courage,
helpfulness, and flexibility, you are empowering those behaviors, whether in
a child, an employee or a friend. (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2005, pp. Promotion-5)

Negative labelling is seen as a disempowering way to let someone know they
are not practicing a particular virtue. Calling a student “lazy” may indicate the
student needs to practice helpfulness or diligence. The label “stupid” may indicate a
need to practice wisdom or respectful attentiveness. Kavelin-Popov states that she
rejects the “generations old” practice of “preaching at students to embarrass them
into behaving properly” and “punitive approaches to character-building—the historic
precedent in schools throughout the world” (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, pp. 31, 35).
Protection from vulnerability, physical or psychological, requires virtues to be
“valued as much as academic achievement,” and the creation of an atmosphere that is
friendly, caring, kind and marked by mutual trust becomes a “culture of character”
(L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 58). The understanding of evil could be construed as the
lack of particular virtues or virtues in practice. Virtues language also takes the
narrator out of a narcissistic focus on the self to acknowledge virtues practiced by
others. This is a form of the love, respect and extended compassion that Nussbaum
advocates for the development of just societies (Nussbaum, 2013). Perhaps
honouring the spirit may generate “the sort of daily emotion, the sympathy, tears, and
laughter” Nussbaum argues are needed by nations, parents, lovers and friends, and
might do what Nussbaum envisages: “keep at bay forces that lurk in all societies and
in all of us” (Nussbaum, 2013, pp. 3, 397).
Conceptions of the Moral Form of Life

The phenomenological philosophical account of the moral form of life put forward by Taylor is a broader morality than that conceived of in Western, particularly English-speaking, traditions. The Virtues Project’s position on the moral form of life is explored here through the lens of Taylor’s account. Its strategies focus on what is worthy of love, and it considers that what is worthy is the practice of virtues.

Strong Evaluation, Moral Goods and Moral Identity

As Taylor claims, a good test for a strong evaluation is whether something can be worthy of admiration or contempt (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 523). Virtues are morally beautiful to us when we use them in virtues language, which is a way of verbally expressing strong evaluations we have made. A virtues acknowledgement is the speaker’s moral reaction to a virtue—the good—observed in practice in a way that was moving and admirable. There are at least two strong evaluations being made in virtues language. The first is the choice of virtue that is worthy of being acknowledged. A teacher associating the virtue, or lack of it, with the student’s behaviour is “a conscious choice,” which, when recognized for “exactly what it is, i.e. honesty, or lack of self-discipline, etc.,” communicates the moral effect the student has on their world and “teaches ownership of actions” (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2005, pp. Workshops-35). The second is the kind of action a virtue has motivated. The student practicing the virtue in response to situations in everyday life is choosing the way to practice the virtue. This is either thought of as worthy and admired, or not, by others.

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Isaacs explains that as strong evaluators we have the capacity to choose what we hold to be worthy of admiration from amongst the plurality of moral conceptions of being and living (Isaacs, 2009b, p. 1). When students learn to use virtues language they are choosing to recognise the practice of a virtue by others as worthy. They are embedded in numerous dialogical relationships that present a plurality of goods, including the many virtues, to choose from. Teachers are advised to nurture the student’s efforts at practicing virtues by recognising a student’s potential for virtues and using virtues language to help “bring it to light” (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 6). Teachers’ choices are already embedded in the social practice of the school and education, and, further, are historically and culturally embedded. Students’ choices are also historically and culturally embedded.

Taylor claims that as well as making strong evaluations about “what it is good to do” we do the same about “who it is good to be” in order to feel a sense of dignity and a sense of fulfilment (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 4). The Virtues Project believes that with consistent virtues language students will identify themselves with virtues in positive ways. Virtues can be assessed as “growth virtues,” which are the challenges of a particular student, or “strength virtues,” which are the virtues the student can rely on to consistently show in their everyday practice (Virtues Project International Association, n.d.-e). Students can evaluate themselves in terms of growth or strength virtues, and their teachers can also evaluate them in this way. The Virtues Project would have students, and their teachers, loving and practicing all the virtues, not stopping at the selection of 52 in the Educator’s Virtues Cards pack (Virtues Project International, 2002b). In this way, all virtues are part of a moral framework that, as Isaacs describes it, “make our everyday life worth living” (Isaacs, 2009b, p. 6). There are particular life goods within The Virtues Project that have to do with the particular
way the moral education approach works in a school context. These are embedded in its strategies and principles (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. xxiv; 2005, pp. Workshops-32, 33).

According to Isaacs, underlying a particular configuration of virtues that might come about for historically and culturally embedded individuals and communities are constitutive goods that may or may not be latent in the moral horizon (Isaacs, 2009b, p. 6). The Virtues Project values all the virtues that are found in different cultures and religions, albeit expressed in practice in diverse ways (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2005, pp. Promotion-16; Workshops-14, 32). The Educator’s Guide sources virtues understanding from quotations of many historic and contemporary people of prominence from around the world (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, pp. 134-238). The attraction to the virtues, as The Virtues Project presents them, appears to be from diverse religious groups, and also from schools that have a secular focus (Frankton Primary School, n.d.; The Virtues Project International Association, n.d.-c). This suggests that The Virtues Project allows for different underlying constitutive goods for the virtues.

Taylor warns there are inherent dangers when an ethical outlook is organized around a particular hypergood, hiding from view the constitutive good in a moral horizon and causing other life goods to be sacrificed (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 63). Bryn-Jones states that sometimes a particular virtue may be out of balance, such as being too responsible or forgetting to ask for help, referring to virtues possibly being “under- or over-developed” (cited in L. Kavelin-Popov, 2005, pp. Promotions-7). She goes on to suggest that excess or weakness in a virtue may need to be balanced

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13 For an exploration of these “life goods” in The Virtues Project’s strategies and principles see Appendices D and E.
with other virtues, such as too much enthusiasm needing self-discipline or respect (cited in L. Kavelin-Popov, 2005, pp. Promotions-7). The Virtues Project sees the strong evaluation of how a virtue, or moral good, is being practiced is in balance with the many moral goods, or virtues, available and also loved and admired as worthy. Kavelin-Popov refers to the balancing of “strong virtues” in children with a “complementary virtue” by focusing virtues language on the latter to cultivate “the balancing quality that the child needs” (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2005, p. 34).

Taylor argues that we experience our strong evaluations in a dynamic way, as moving closer to, or falling away from, them, giving them a powerful role in the constitution of our identity (Abbey, 2000, p. 24; C. Taylor, 1989, p. 62). This makes the combination and ranking of our life goods, our moral framework or moral horizon, an “orientation essential to our identity” (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 78). There is an implicit understanding in The Virtues Project that the virtues constitute our identity. The sense of moving closer or falling away from the virtues is evident in growth virtues and strength virtues.

**Inescapable Moral Horizons, Moral Sources and Moral Quests**

Living within a strongly evaluated horizon of one sort or another is an essential feature of personhood (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 27). The Virtues Project is aware of multiple horizons, acknowledging the “diverse beliefs, religions, and cultural practices from one family to another” in a pluralistic society and the “fierce debate” surrounding the introduction of values education into schools (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2005, pp. Promotion-16). Recognizing that “there is no such thing as a value-neutral environment” and refusing to become paralysed by the moral education conundrum, The Virtues Project suggests that “a simple solution” is to “come in the ‘side door’
with virtues” (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2005, pp. Promotion-16). This “side door” is perhaps a problematic metaphor for how the virtues, in particular recognition of virtues in practice, are “a simple solution” to challenges of moral pluralism. Perhaps the side door is more of a multiple entry doorway through which people with diverse moral interpretations can enter into a web of interlocution, as Taylor describes it, or an expressive-collaborative space, as Walker describes it (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 36; Walker, 2007, pp. 66-77).

Taylor explains moral frameworks, or moral horizons, are how we make sense of our lives spiritually. “Not to have a framework is to fall into a life which is spiritually senseless” (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 18). Kavelin-Popov claims a possible cause of meaninglessness is the lack of articulation and practice of the virtues, which she, her husband and her brother found in the “world’s wisdom literature” and considered crucial to a purposeful life (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2005, Introduction p.19, Promotion p.2, Handout p.1). Using Taylor’s terminology, The Virtues Project makes the claim that virtues are elemental to moral frameworks, to the life goods that comprise these moral horizons, and to the purposes that give direction to our lives. The Virtues Project seeks to assist individuals and groups in their moral quests for meaning and meaningful lives.

Our background understandings are often unarticulated, which, Taylor suggests, makes our moral sources remote from our consciousness (C. Taylor, 1989, 2007). The Virtues Project strategies open up a dialogical moral space to explore moral understandings for students and teachers in a school context. There is no direct provision in these strategies for individuals or particular communities to retrieve and articulate their particular moral sources. However, the Leaders’ Manual does bring into the purview of its facilitators the moral sources of the virtues as the world’s
sacred texts (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2005), and the Educator’s Guide does implicitly involve a wide range of historically prominent people’s understandings in the quotations included in the glossary of virtues (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000). Works of historical and cultural retrieval, such as Taylor’s project for Western moral sources (C. Taylor, 1989, 2007), are beyond the everyday view for young students. Yet such works are not outside the possible embrace of The Virtues Project and perhaps would be welcomed by its proponents. In any case, The Virtues Project embraces the historical and cultural inheritances of all people and gives space for everyday retrieval of the virtues embedded within to interpret them in the local and contemporary context.

Taylor contends that pre-moderns conceived of their moral horizons as external to themselves, and that moderns, at least in the Western cultural context, conceptualize identity as to be found within (Abbey, 2000, pp. 48, 85). The Virtues Project has a foundational understanding that virtues exist in potential within each person and need awakening and mastery (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. xv). This places the conception of the self in The Virtues Project as distinctly modern, particularly in the sense of a Western cultural context. Non-Western cultural contexts may not perceive identity as being within. While diverse cultural and religious groups show an attraction to The Virtues Project, these may all be groups that embrace the modern conception of identity and the self as being within.

Taylor claims three broad moral horizons began to emerge for English-speaking countries in the eighteenth century, involving the moral sources of Reason, Nature, and God (C. Taylor, 1989, 2007). The first two were outcomes of the older third (Abbey, 2000, p. 98). The Virtues Project in some way draws on all three, and, like Taylor, recalls God as the overarching historical moral source (L. Kavelin-
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Popov, 2005; C. Taylor, 2007, 2011). Reason is drawn on as a moral source in the idea of healthy choice making embedded in the principles and strategies. Nature is drawn on as a moral source in Kavelin-Popov’s claim in the Educator’s Guide that the virtues need to be “awakened” because they “already exist within the child” (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. xx). With the statement, “virtues are the oldest ideas in the world” (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. xvii) and a reference to the “world’s wisdom traditions” that all describe the purpose of life as the cultivation of the virtues (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. xvii), God, after Taylor’s explanation, is established as the ultimate moral source for The Virtues Project.

The attempts we make to carry out a modern moral quest in our dialogical engagements, which according to Taylor is to create a believable framework, is made difficult, firstly, because our frameworks are implicit, and, secondly, because sometimes what we explicitly affirm does not match what is implicit (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 9). Virtues language brings the virtues into our dialogical purview and also into our internally conscious moral thinking. It is a tool to assist in the moral quest of creating a believable moral framework, one that is aligned with respectful and non-violent interpretations of how to live a life (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2005, pp. Promotion-5). Taylor asserts that a quest for a more believable framework seeks to result in a “fusion of horizons” (Abbey, 2000, p. 163).

We also struggle when our horizons clash with different and diverse others (Abbey, 2000, p. 163). Taylor understands there is a permeability in our moral horizons that makes it possible for their fusion, which a quest for a more believable framework not only invites but also embraces when we find various moral goods believable (Abbey, 2000, pp. 161-163). The virtues language strategy places the dialogue of moral interlocutors squarely within that space of blending moral
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horizons. The narrator posits an interpretation of a virtue in practice as observed in the actions of another. The actor does not remain inert to such acknowledgements, guides or corrections. Agreement with the interpretation of the virtue is given by something like a smile, and disagreement may result in a correction of the interpretation. Whatever the case, the virtue is the shared space of the fusion of horizons. The Virtues Project’s claim that virtues are the “silver thread” in sacred texts is, then, a claim that virtues are entries into the shared moral horizon (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2005, pp. Introduction-19).

**Together Goods and Social Practices**

Taylor identifies there are some moral goods that are “together goods,” or shared goods, that “can only be generated in common with others” and can only be affirmed by a “we” rather than an “I” (Abbey, 2000, pp. 119-120). The Virtues Project embraces the virtues as together goods developed in community through practice and virtues language. Its claim that virtues are elemental to all human engagements underscores this point.

Webs of relationships are framed within social practices, the moral horizons of which influence the nature of human engagements and the webs of interlocution within its sphere (Isaacs, 2004, p. 12). The stability of loving, caring and affirming relationships are necessary for the self to be or become (Isaacs, 2009b, p. 7). The five Virtues Project strategies and its principles advocate a caring and loving attitude towards students. The virtues language is framed in respectful and caring tones, even when phrased as a correction. The teachable moment strategy requires the attentiveness of the teacher for the student, and the students towards each other. Setting virtues-based boundaries is a respectful way of drawing the students’ gaze
towards the good. Honouring the spirit is an appreciative way of recognizing the
good in others and in community, and spiritual companioning is a friendly and
respectful way to engage with someone facing moral predicaments. The principles
are embedded in an ethic of care, using terms such as “respectful” and “empowering”
(L. Kavelin-Popov, 2005, pp. Workshops-32-33). The Virtues Project promotes the
social practice of a moral education approach based on relational care in a school.

The Virtues Project has been influenced by various social practices with
distinctive shared goods of their own. The three founders of The Virtues Project were
embedded in several social practices that provided them with resources of crucial
understandings and purposes, both tacit and explicit, as they set about developing
their new project. The biographies of the three authors reveal the work-related social
practices of psychotherapy and clinical psychology, hospice care, philosophy of
religion, and Disney imagineering (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2005, pp. Promotion-1, 2).
Each of these has contributed in some way to the understandings quilted together to
inform the moral framework of The Virtues Project, just as their religious
understandings will have done.

Psychotherapy has had a particularly strong influence. Psychotherapists view
the whole person rather than just the outward problem, listening for underlying issues
and attuning to the person’s readiness to initiate positive change on their own as part
of their ongoing transition to a better way of being (Young, 2011, p. 1). Therapists,
Isaacs comments, deal with the fracture of the client’s experience and the healing
process in a process of voice engagement making the healing process a moral
practice (Isaacs, 2009a). This suggests that the psychotherapy framework may have
played a significant role in shaping The Virtues Project. The Virtues Project virtues
language and companioning strategies resonate strongly with the therapist’s
framework. Psychotherapists understand they can only be facilitators, teaching specific techniques from positive thinking to particular social skills that are kept simple and reflect common sense (Young, 2011, p. 1). Virtues language, teachable moments and clear boundaries are simple techniques that facilitate both positive thinking in the light of the virtues and help develop social skills. All the strategies have the intention to increase the attunement of people to their own and each other’s virtues. An overarching principle for psychotherapy, reveals Young, is to help patients to activate more positive actions, thoughts, feelings, ways of living and stories about the self and the future (Young, 2011, p. 1). The Virtues Project strategies strongly reflect the moral understandings prevalent in psychotherapy.

Three other social practices that have had an influential effect on The Virtues Project, particularly at the outset, are philosophy, religions, and imagineering. A philosophical analysis of religious vocabulary, specifically that of the virtues, is a crucial part of the beginning story of The Virtues Project. The understanding of virtues as being the oldest ideas in the world is a feature in the argument for virtues language. Imagineering is the process of “blue sky speculation” or generating ideas with no limits, which customarily begins with the boldest and wildest idea presented in convincing detail, or “eyewash,” and ends with “plussing,” or always working on more innovation and improvement (Wikipedia, 2013). Plussing reinforces the notion of continual virtues development, and tapping into the human imagination to provide continuous observations of virtues practice is perhaps akin to “blue sky speculation”. But perhaps the real underlying contribution of imagineering practice is the commercial approach to beautifying the virtues cards and the website to be attractive and more worthy of attention.
Further, the founders are embedded in a particular religion as members of the Bahá’í Faith, an independent world religion that began in mid-nineteenth century Persia, and is now ‘established in more than 100,000 localities in virtually every country and territory around the world’ (Bahá’í International Community, 2014). Central to the teachings of Bahá’u’lláh, the Prophet Founder of the Bahá’í Faith, is the unity of God, religion and humanity, and the fundamental principles of the elimination of prejudice, full equality of the sexes, the essential oneness of the world’s great religions, universal education and collective security, to name a few. These all emanate from the notion of unity. Social and economic development initiatives focused on individual and community transformation are encouraged, some being launched by Bahá’í communities and some by individuals inspired by their beliefs, their capacities and interests, and the needs they see in their communities (Bahá’í International Community, 2014).

The Virtues Project, developed by individuals who are members of the Bahá’í Faith, reflects an acceptance of the essential oneness of religions by identifying the virtues as a common thread running through them all. It upholds the principle of universal education in its quest to spread the use of virtues language and the other strategies to every country, now claimed to be in up to 100 countries, and accessible for any person of any age in any situation (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2013, p. 2). The commitment to eliminating prejudice is demonstrated in its embrace of indigenous wisdom, such as the First Nations concept of the Four Medicines and “walk along,” as well as giving examples of the application of the strategies from different ethnic experiences (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000). The discontent with and active response to the growing violence in children and youth in America’s schools is part of a commitment to contribute to the collective security of the human race.
The focus on social development in the Bahá’í Faith is also a possible motivating factor for the founders of The Virtues Project, though the Bahá’ís are not the only group active in this regard. Kavelin-Popov maintains that The Virtues Project International Association is independent and “not affiliated with any government, corporate, education, or religious organizations,” emphasizing the nature of The Virtues Project as an independent initiative rather than one commissioned and monitored by a particular institution representing a particular religion (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2005, pp. Introduction-20).

The Virtues Project itself exhibits many features of an independent social practice. There is a distinct network of Virtues Project facilitators and master facilitators who communicate through an active online forum, the Facilitator Exchange List Server (The Virtues Project International Association, n.d.-b). A newsletter is available on the website (The Virtues Project International Association, 2013, September). Local organizing groups called “Virtues Connections” hold numerous workshops, webinars are offered online by master facilitators, and Regional or Global Mentorships, or conferences, are held periodically in different locations around the world (The Virtues Project International Association, n.d.-e). There are 263 master facilitators listed on the website (The Virtues Project International Association, n.d.-f). The overall purpose that provides unity is the promotion of the principles, practices and strategies of The Virtues Project, and a number of guidelines are provided to facilitators on completion of their training (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2005, p. Resources Section). The workshops, Virtues Connections, conferences and online communications contribute to developing shared understandings and actions. The continuity and adaptability of The Virtues Project as a community is achieved through training and moving through stages of
implementation and facilitation, and through joining a local and international network. The institutional structure of decision-making rested with Virtues Project International until the end of 2012 when it was transferred to The Virtues Project International Association, a not-for-profit organization with a board and CEO, when the remaining founders retired (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2013, p. 2). The Virtues Project can be considered as a social practice in its own right.

**Practical Reason**

Taylor explains practical reason is always going on because we make strong evaluations and narratively understand our lives (Abbey, 2000, p. 20). Virtues language gives voice to the strong evaluations, and its narrative form interlocks with the narrative understanding of our lives, giving virtues language a practical reasoning quality. It uses the reasonableness of narrative to make sense of ethical engagements, which Isaacs sees as achievable when certainty is not (Isaacs, 2001, p. 17). In Kearney’s narrative terms, the credibility of the narrative of virtues language involves the practical wisdom of “respecting the singularity of situations as well as the nascent universality of values aimed at by human actions” (Kearney, 2002, p. 143). Virtues language, in care ethics terms, is a caring response to the situation of the other that draws on Aristotle’s *phronesis*, or practical wisdom (Bergman, 2004, p. 151). The virtues-based boundaries and spiritual companionship strategies also demonstrate features of practical reasoning, reasonableness and practical wisdom.

Taylor argues that the outcome for all interlocutors in conversations is more powerful when characterised by practical reasoning, that is, when the matter in question is explored and expressed clearly by and for all sides (Abbey, 2000, p. 168). The virtues language strategy played out over time may manifest a kind of practical
reasoning within a community about the understanding of virtues and how they manifest in practice. In this way each acknowledgement, guide and correction would be a contribution in a kind of practical reasoning in a web of interlocutors, each a clear account of a particular virtue expressed in narrative terms. It is not the sophisticated form of practical reason that Taylor seems to mean when he talks about making the articulation of our tacit backgrounds discernible so that ontological claims “can be rationally argued about and sifted” and agreement reached “between disputing positions” (Abbey, 2000, p. 166; C. Taylor, 1989, p. 8).

The narrative form of practical reason that Taylor explains is used in the way we make strong evaluations is, however, present in the way a web of interlocutors might use virtues language. Strong evaluations are often made implicitly, and when they are made explicitly this gives rise to strong evaluative language, which can make our tacit backgrounds discernible (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 8). Virtues language is strongly evaluative language and, therefore, according to Taylor’s account, at least makes tacit backgrounds discernible. The other four strategies assist in a form of gradual background sifting through ontological claims. When a virtues-based boundary is arrived at between teacher and students there is a reconciliation of positions that goes on: the particular way of behaving by students and the standard of behaviour the teacher wishes to train the students in. Virtues-based boundaries are adjusted over time as the understandings and practice of the students and the purposes of the learning environment require. The restorative justice dimension to the virtues-based boundaries strategy encourages the engagement of practical reasoning between student and teacher with the express purpose of articulating particular features of moral goods, virtues, in the moral horizon of the student and teacher/school. There are two positions to be articulated: the student’s articulation
about the engagement in question and how particular virtues played or did not play a role, and the teacher’s articulation of how outcomes of the engagement may have been the cause of moral flourishing for all parties had particular virtues been practiced in balance with each other. The companioning strategy has a seven-step approach to guide a caring person in accompanying someone needing care through a practical reasoning process. In asking virtues reflection questions of a person, the practical reasoning process is assisted. The companioning process may involve comparing, questioning, articulating and re-articulating views and examining positions as the person sorts through the issues of a moral plight or predicament.

Noddings suggests that when the carer experiences engrossment in the situation of the other they make a caring response, which draws on Aristotle’s *phronesis*, or practical wisdom (Bergman, 2004, p. 151). There is an implicit promotion of Noddings’ kind of engrossment in the Virtues Project strategies. Although there is no prescribed response for the one who has practiced the virtue, there is a great deal of emphasis on being attentive to the other. Establishing restorative justice, a goal in virtues-based boundaries, requires being attentive to students’ stories for context, motive and response (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 65). In the companioning strategy the one companioning is instructed to be attentive “so that the one being heard can hear himself and find his own clarity” (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 109). The attentive listener needs to “focus on sensory cues,” to “follow the other’s lead” and then ask virtues reflection questions relating to their issues “that lead them to their own answers” (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 114). The aim, states Kavelin-Popov, is to have a “reverent curiosity” to assist the other to reach and stimulate the wisdom within, rather than impose solutions on the other (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 109).
The evidence of engrossment adds to the sense that practical reason may be cultivated through the Virtues Project strategies.

Abbey explains Taylor’s idea of the principle of initial respect for the views of others so that open-ended exploration and insightful appreciation of each other’s differences might empower those dialogically engaged (Abbey, 2000, pp. 166, 168). Virtues language is a respectful initial engagement with others, one that recognizes the practice of virtues. It appeals to the possible fusion of horizons between the one giving the virtues acknowledgement and the one practicing the virtues.

**Articulation of Moral Horizons**

Taylor maintains that without any articulation there is no adhesion to moral goods, that “these goods are not even options” (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 91). The Virtues Project promotes articulation about the virtues every day through virtues language and the other strategies. It replaces ways of relating that promote inarticulacy of the virtues. Some examples are “replacing shaming with naming virtues” (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 10); replacing “conscience-breaking” punitive approaches to character building with “conscience-making” virtues language (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 35); using authority in service of learning instead of expressing it as dominance and power over others (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 58); and helping children to make moral choices, not by giving wisdom but by supporting them to discover their own wisdom (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 110). The Virtues Project also supports the articulation of understandings about the virtues in other forms beyond our ordinary conversations, recommending that the virtues be a focus in the performing arts, poetry and music, for example (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 90).
“Articulation can bring us closer to the ‘good’ as a moral source,” says Taylor, it “can give it power” (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 92). The Virtues Project’s recognition of the cultural traditions and sacred texts of the world as moral sources of the virtues is minimized in the publications produced for use in schools to mitigate concerns about allegiance to religious sources. Interestingly, disconnecting the virtues from their sacred origins does not seem to lessen the attraction to The Virtues Project by a variety of religious groups. In response to particular religious groups, The Virtues Project has published virtues cards sets for a variety of religions with quotations from their sacred writings. The Virtues Project provides the strategies, particularly the virtues language, as a way of fostering richer understandings about, and love for, the virtues through daily practice.

The role of articulation of the kind that Taylor talks about is to make explicit the moral sources that are presupposed in moral values, moral practices and moral attitudes (Isaacs, 2009b, p. 6). The moral sources of the virtues are not articulated in the use of the strategies of The Virtues Project, even though The Virtues Project itself acknowledges that the moral sources of the virtues are the world’s sacred texts. This claim may resonate with people from numerous backgrounds and promote their self-understandings in terms of the virtues. The Virtues Project claims to have synthesized the core meaning of each virtue based on these original religious sources, yet does not specifically articulate the actual sources for arriving at the specific accounts of each virtue, other than to give a general acknowledgement that the scared texts and cultural traditions are the narratives drawn on for arriving at the various accounts (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 4; 2005, pp. Introduction-19).

14 There are 10 different “religious” virtues cards sets in the religious education section in the Virtues Shop, https://virtuesshop.com/.
While the virtues were initially explored and accounts about numerous virtues written, there seems to be no move to explore and research these virtues further, either in a historical and cultural retrieval sense or in the way they might be understood, loved and practiced in diverse contexts today. Instead, those who implement its strategies are left to make their own connections with whatever moral source they presuppose when they are attracted to the virtues. Articulation of the virtues through the strategies might bring people closer to a moral source because they become more attracted to the virtues, but it does not bring into view the moral sources so that diverse ontological claims can be explored and understanding result (Abbey, 2000, p. 166; C. Taylor, 1989, p. 8). Taylor’s motive for articulation of moral sources and constitutive goods that motivate our moral responses, as Isaacs interprets it, is to lay “the foundation for an informed toleration of moral differences” (Isaacs, 2009b, p. 7). It is unclear if The Virtues Project can bring this about on its own, but this may not be its intention. Kavelin-Popov states the mission of The Virtues Project is to provide “tools for the cultivation of virtues in individuals, families, organizations and communities” (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2005, pp. Promotion-1). The articulation of the moral sources that underlie the love for virtues that people may already have is not considered necessary for the aims of the strategies that function as tools to cultivate virtues in people and communities.

**Conceptions of Moral Engagement**

In the last 50 years, moral education has focused strongly on cognitive development and moral decision-making, which the everyday applied ethics underpinning this research interprets as reflecting a narrowed view of morality. This
section explores the dimensions of moral engagements as advocated by The Virtues Project. It discusses the forms of power and ethics in relationships inherent in its strategies, its position in relation to the expressive-collaborative model of morality, and the kinds of encounters with the good it fosters.

**Forms of Power and Ethics in Relationships**

May states that power is endemic to being human as the ability to cause or prevent change (R. May, 1972, p. 99). Kavelin-Popov equates the term virtue with power by referring to the Latin root word *virtus*, which means “strength, power, capacity, and energy” (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 5). The naming of the virtue in virtues language is, according to Kavelin-Popov, communicating to the person that a certain kind of power is seen within them. She asserts that language has “the power to break a heart or inspire a dream,” and that the significant power of teachers comes primarily from “whether they see a child in a negative light or in light of their positive possibilities” (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 3). In the same manner as the descriptions of exploitative power by May, (R. May, 1972, pp. 99-119), Kavelin-Popov asserts that the disabling methods of harsh authority only model violence or oppression to students, and, in the absence of any authority, students will become the harsh authority (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 61).

The five strategies are “resources or tools” for developing “social skills,” making their implementation and practice a way to improve moral engagement skills (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 29; 2005, pp. Introduction-14). Social skills are understood to be the practice of virtues, which are aligned with May’s notions of positive forms of power that focus on the moral flourishing of others, namely nurturative and integrative powers. The motivation for nurturative power is concern
for the welfare of others, a power that parents and teachers might typically be assumed to provide (R. May, 1972, pp. 99-119). The strategies are described by Kavelin-Popov as having “an educative approach to character building in which a healthy conscience is stimulated and nurtured” (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 36). The “empowering educator” permits freedom within boundaries for children (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 64). Restorative justice, in the setting clear virtues-based boundaries strategy, goes beyond apology and forgiveness to include making amends to repair any damage in relationships (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 67). To focus on nurturing children’s positive potentialities, it is important for teachers to find something they “legitimately appreciate” about a student in order to voice “meaningful recognition” (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 4). The teacher’s recognition of “growth virtues” is the application of nurturing power (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 6). Virtues language is described as “a tool with which teachers can respond in an empowering rather than a demoralizing way” (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 36).

Kavelin-Popov claims there are four principles that contribute to the virtues development in students: the nature of the child, or virtues “profile”; the nurturance of the child, or how the virtues are recognized in the child; the opportunity provided the child to act on their virtues; and the effort of the child to take responsibility to act on their own potential virtues (L. Kavelin-Popov et al., 1997, p. 2). These inform the five strategies to “help children to remember who they really are, and to know that the purpose of life is to have a life of purpose” (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. xix). The intentions inherent in the strategies of The Virtues Project strongly promote the practice of nurturative power to empower others, particularly students.

Kavelin-Popov distinguishes caring that seeks to solve the problems of others, a disabling approach, as different to caring that supports others to “discover their
own wisdom and discernment” (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 110). The role of the caring person in the companioning relationship is similar to Noddings’ description of the carer’s role being one of openness and caring receptivity (Noddings, 2007, p. 228), and aligns The Virtues Project with the ethic of care. Just as care ethics advocates allowing students to move from cared-for to take on the carer role, the strategies of The Virtues Project can just as easily be implemented by students (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 36). The form of power most evident in the Virtues Project strategies is nurturative, which aligns it closely with care ethics. Nussbaum considers “shaping an emotional climate hostile to shaming and supportive of compassion” supports educational inclusion (Nussbaum, 2013, p. 371). The Virtues Project uses the same kind of idea. Kavelin-Popov advocates naming virtues as replacing shaming and authority as being in service of learning instead of expressions of dominance and power over others (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, pp. 10, 58). It is possible that the Virtues Project strategies, and therefore the practice of virtues, promote what Nussbaum calls extended compassion (Nussbaum, 2013) between teachers and students, and that they support inclusive education.

When relationships, practices, institutions and communities experience flourishing, according to May, then integrative power is used by people together, with and for each other (R. May, 1972, pp. 99-119). As a social practice, The Virtues Project states it does not seek to be in competition with other initiatives, rather it claims the principles, practices and strategies “can enhance and complement any endeavour or approach that encourages people to live by the best within” (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2005, p. Resources Section). Its political aim is benevolent, or in terms of May’s forms of power it is nurturative with respect to the cultivation of virtues practice and integrative with other initiatives that seek the positive
development of students. In Nussbaum’s terms (Nussbaum, 2013, p. 389), it does not coerce but invites people to cultivate virtues practice.

**Moral Engagement as the Expressive-Collaborative Space of a Web of Interlocutors**

The negotiation of understanding of moral engagement, as Margaret Urban Walker observes (Walker, 2007), is an embedded feature in the Virtues Project strategies. The narrative elaboration of the virtues observed in practice is a key element in developing self-identity. Virtues, as the potential within that is recognized by others when expressed in practice, transform individuals and raise self-esteem (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 5). The exchange of virtues language between people results in a negotiation of meaning of the virtue in a culturally bound way. The progressive acknowledgement and adjustment among people, as Walker explains, is a medium for morality in a common world (Walker, 2007, p. 35). The development of people with self-confidence and good relationships is the “adjustment” in human development that the virtues language aims for. Walker talks of “keeping moral space open” (Walker, 1993). An outcome of the Virtues Project tools for cultivating the virtues is an opening up of moral space as individual interpretations of virtues regarding their practice are shared.

Walker envisages moral collaborations will be complex in morally problematic situations where there are different interpretations of what is relevant and ethically applicable (Walker, 1993, p. 38). The Virtues Project also anticipates that morally problematic situations do occur in schools as students learn about virtues practice in their everyday lives and created two strategies that would assist in this regard. The first is the virtues-based boundaries strategy that recommends teachers begin dealing
with morally problematic situations by listening to student narratives about what happened. Teachers work with students to analyse the narratives for virtues not practiced and take note of those that were. Continuing together, restorative and educative steps that include virtues practice are devised for students to follow up with (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, pp. 68-75). The second strategy is spiritual companionship, which is recommended for teachers to go beyond problem-solving to examine the meaning, purpose and virtues of a moral issue (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 109). Rather than solving the student’s problem, the teacher supports the student to make their own moral choices using seven steps that help to focus on the virtues involved (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, pp. 113-115). The strategies are also tools that students can use. This would suggest that in the exchange of virtues language, and in the exchange that could occur in the other strategies, relationships could be characterised by integrative power. The mode of morality that the Virtues Project strategies establish is the expressive-collaborative model of morality that Walker describes (Walker, 1993, 2007). The development of moral decision-making skills in students has long been a concern in contemporary moral education. The way The Virtues Project deals with moral decision-making is not from the theoretical-juridical mode of morality, a conception that Walker identifies as underlying dominant moral theories (Walker, 2007, p. 58). The Virtues Project views moral decision-making as relational and negotiable, and engages people in what Walker describes as an expressive-collaborative mode of morality (Walker, 2007, pp. 66-77). Moral decision-making and engagement is not a matter of merely adhering to unchangeable universal principles; it is a matter of responding to the complexity of human engagement and of moral being and becoming in the light of dearly held principles that guide one’s purpose and direction.
Encounters with the Good

Encounters with the good are experiences during which we are aware of joy, peace and contentment (Isaacs, 2007, p. 17). Moral sources, says Taylor, empower us because we find them worthy of our love (Abbey, 2000, p. 49). There are two important ways in which The Virtues Project promotes encounters with the good for school communities using its strategies in the everyday of school life. The good is encountered as moral beauty each time a virtue is recognized in practice or honoured in the school, as part of what is meaningful about life. Virtues acknowledgements are a way of expressing what is morally beautiful in the way someone is engaging with others and living a meaningful life. It affirms the ways in which the dignity of being human is manifest in a person. Love for virtues and loving care in relationships can result from the recognition of what is considered morally worthy.

A second way of encountering the good is internally as a self in dialogue with itself (Isaacs, 2007, p. 18). Inner dialogues strongly feature contrapuntal voices, which are advice, admonitions and stories from many conversations previously heard and read (Gilligan et al., 2004, p. 159; Isaacs, 2007, p. 18). Kavelin-Popov refers to this way of encountering the good when she reveals that the strategies were designed to stimulate and nurture a “healthy conscience” (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 36). The immersion in many virtues language dialogues and positive affirmations of the practice of virtues in action encourage remembering them in the inner conversations of the self. Rather than the refrain of negative labels establishing as contrapuntal voices in the inner conversations of the self, virtues acknowledgements replace them (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, pp. 33-34). These inner encounters with the good, which The Virtues Project seeks to foster, can contribute to a person’s moral quest to clarify and understand their moral horizon.
Isaacs explains that all the encounters with the good that we experience are the background in which our becoming selves are embedded and from which our “narrative voice emerges and finds its meaning” (Isaacs, 2007, p. 14). It seems possible that The Virtues Project can enhance the moral task of constructing a plausible narrative to build ever-greater coherence of moral understanding of, and during, a life.

**Conceptions of Cross-Cultural Opportunities**

The problematic of moral plurality has deepened in moral education as cross-cultural opportunities have increased in the modern world. The global pollination of highly successful social practices by culturally diverse groups is now an increasingly common phenomenon, and moral education is also following this trend. The Virtues Project has been introduced to people in many countries and claims to contribute to the cultivation of virtues in diverse cultures. It is explored in this section for its considerations of ontology in culture, culture and powerful social movements, cross-cultural discourse and practical reason, an ontological perspective on cross-cultural opportunities, and the possibility of a basic universal morality that embraces moral plurality.

**Ontology in Culture**

Using Taylor’s account we can understand that culture furnishes an “array of linguistic, intellectual, emotional and aesthetic resources” for an individual to assemble interpretations and self-interpretations (Abbey, 2000, p. 66). The Virtues Project seeks to bring to attention the simple elements of spirituality, the virtues,
found in all cultural and sacred traditions (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2005, pp. Workshops-31). Kavelin-Popov explains that it is based on the world’s sacred traditions and claims that the virtues are valued by all cultures.

The Project is based on the simple wisdom of the world’s diverse sacred traditions. The virtues are universally valued by all cultures as the content of our character and the qualities of the human spirit. The strategies of The Virtues Project™ help us to remember who we really are. (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2005, pp. Introduction-20)

The virtues cards give a description of each virtue, along with examples of what the virtue might look like in practice. These are based on the founders’ interpretations of “the simple wisdom about virtues found in all sacred traditions” (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2005, pp. Workshops-46). Students are invited to read and reflect on the Educator’s Virtues Cards in sharing circles activities recommended in the virtues card pack (Virtues Project International, 2002b). The understandings of virtues have, in a sense, been retrieved from multiple sources and articulated for ease of understanding for students. They serve as reminders, but are not enforced interpretations (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2005, pp. Promotion-18). Rather than identifying with one particular culture or religion, the orientation, asserts Kavelin-Popov, is “multi-cultural, multi-faith” (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2005, pp. Workshops-20). Believing every culture to have “some kind of spiritual belief system,” they hypothesize that “a search should reveal these virtues in these belief systems” (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2005, pp. Workshops-5).

The virtues language strategy provides alternative sources of interpretation to that of the founders’ reading of the diverse cultural and religious texts: that of the interlocutors themselves. The interpretations of interlocutors wherever they reside,
according to Taylor’s account, are also sourced from their particular history and culture, the cultural ways of being and knowing (Abbey, 2000, p. 71). Isaacs suggests that a “rich” society, one endowed with cultural and social capital, is one “which can provide enabling opportunities for persons’ purposive, relational, and creative capacities” (Isaacs, 2009b, p. 9). The virtues language strategy allows this kind of culture to develop in a school.

**Culture and Powerful Social Movements**

The modern Western cultural identity has been propelled across the globe, embraced and sometimes imposed on other cultures, which has been of “fateful importance to the development of other cultures” (C. Taylor, 1989, pp. 206-207). The liberal democratic governments of the West are the predominant providers of education for their citizens, yet education is only one of the social practices these governments are concerned with. “Military power, scientific and technological advancement, and economic practices” are more powerful social forces because they have been instrumental in propelling the Western culture across the globe (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 207). Lovat et al. fear these forces are “capable of destroying education and most of those who enter its school system” (Lovat et al., 2011, p. 227). The founders of The Virtues Project are perhaps referring to the impact of these same powerful social forces when they express alarm “at the violence in our society—in families, communities and nations” (L. Kavelin- Popov, 2005, pp. Workshops-4). The Virtues Project is their response. The strategies are offered as tools for individuals and communities to use to protect children and youth from perpetrating, and becoming victim to, the kinds of violence seen in American schools today (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2005, pp. Workshops-45).
Noddings sees the American character education approach of the turn of the twentieth century as ontologically synergistic with the liberal democratic worldview, and claims its methods are still recognizable in moral education approaches around the world today (Noddings, 2007, p. 167). It could be assumed from the list of virtues in The Virtues Project that this century’s old approach has also influenced it. However, the Virtues Project’s ontological view, as has been shown, has more similarity with Noddings’ care ethics approach, which sees that authentic human liberation and social justice is achieved by people in caring communities (Noddings, 2002b, p. 103).

Nussbaum argues that the implicit moral concerns in the liberal ideal need to be recovered in order to achieve a just society, and she suggests that the public emotions of “love, respect and extended compassion” for these moral concerns have a vital role to play (Nussbaum, 2013, p. 203). She suggests that “fear, envy and shame need theoretical analysis” in order to understand how the moral concerns of the liberal ideal might be managed (Nussbaum, 2013, p. 202). The spiritual companioning and virtues-based boundaries strategies deal with this kind of analysis on an everyday level in schools through the kind of virtues analysis that goes on in them. Though this is not the depth of analysis that Nussbaum calls for, these are strategies that have had at least anecdotal success in cultivating the virtues of love, respect and compassion in students and schools. The vision of The Virtues Project is similar to, and as grand as, Nussbaum’s vision to bring these powerful public emotions back into view in order to develop just societies. The Virtues Project seeks to “serve humanity by having an empowering global impact on the moral and spiritual development of peoples of all cultures, by helping them to remember who
they really are and to live by their highest values” (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2005, pp. Promotion-1).

**Cross-Cultural Discourse and Practical Reason**

The fusion of horizons in cross-cultural dialogue is as a result of shared articulations that allow mutual understanding and recognition of difference (Abbey, 2000; C. Taylor, 1995, p. 151). Virtues language is a dialogue of moral interlocutors for whom a fusion of horizons in the understanding and practice of virtues can occur. Narrator and actor exchange something, even if it is a tacit agreement with the virtues language statement. When virtues language is practiced in cross-cultural engagements a shared understanding could be the result.

Taylor’s account explains that practical reasoning happens in cross-cultural dialogue, and Abbey recognizes that willingness to know the other, not dismissing the strange, respecting difference, openness to change, and courageous questioning of personal assumptions are “intellectual virtues” which characterise cross-cultural moral engagements (Abbey, 2000, pp. 163, 167). The successful use of the strategies in a school context would appear to presuppose a willingness to know the other. However, it may not guarantee the other intellectual virtues. In a cross-cultural context, according to Taylor, practical reason involves articulating tacit backgrounds to explore ontological claims so that disputing positions might find agreement (Abbey, 2000, p. 166; C. Taylor, 1989, p. 8). This type of practical reason is not present in the Virtues Project strategies.

The Virtues Project’s claim that the religions of the world have a shared appreciation of the virtues is a claim that virtues are a starting point for a fusion of horizons. The virtues become a doorway for people to enter into moral dialogue. The
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expressive-collaborative nature of the dialogue of understanding and the practicing of virtues that virtues language fosters would, over time, result in shared understanding and mutual accountability in a school community. It does not, however, actively engage the school community in retrieving the historical and cultural moral sources that are drawn on, nor does it actively explore diverse ontological claims. The recognition of moral beauty in the virtues may lead people “to live by their highest values,” however, “remembering who they really are” (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2005, pp. Promotion-1), even if this means being people who practice virtues, may still be differently conceptualised in diverse cultures. This may make the strategies and the virtues inadequate on their own for diverse peoples to bridge such ontological divides.

The Possibility of a Basic Universal Morality that Embraces Plurality

Taylor identifies clusters of moral intuitions that lie along three axes of our moral life (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 14). The first cluster of moral intuitions revolves around a sense of respect for and duty towards others (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 14). The Virtues Project’s underpinning ontology is that of a caring, relational self that critically observes the application of virtues in practice. In virtues language respect for others is conveyed through acknowledging virtues. In virtues-based boundaries the virtues are expressed in terms of personal or group boundaries that set the parameters for moral respect within and from others (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2005, pp. Promotion-5).

The second cluster of moral intuitions revolves around our notions of a full and meaningful life (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 14). The Virtues Project promotes ways of life that include the practice of the virtues, which is tempered by balancing virtues with
each other. It advocates showing respect for diversity in the way people may practice the strategies and the way they value the virtues (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2005, pp. Introduction-14).

The third cluster of moral intuitions revolves around notions of human dignity (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 15). The Virtues Project seeks “to enhance self-esteem, morale, team unity, integrity and practices of excellence, and to honour the spiritual dimension” (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2005, pp. Workshops-43). Virtues language builds self-esteem, or dignity, “when shaming, blaming language is replaced by calling each other to the virtues,” or, put another way, knowingly practicing the virtues builds self-esteem (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2005, pp. Promotion-5).

Taylor makes the claim that these axes of moral thinking have universal validity. He distinguishes this level of moral thinking from the kind of moral thinking that goes on at a cultural level and which is different from culture to culture (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 88). The Virtues Project implicitly understands the virtues as the basic elements in each axis of moral thinking. Practicing and acknowledging virtues are both modes of respecting others. Practicing and acknowledging virtues enable the flourishing of a meaningful life. Practicing and acknowledging virtues brings dignity to a person and a community. It is at this basic universal human level that The Virtues Project operates as a moral education approach.

The cultural level of moral thinking, as Taylor understands it, is the diversity of culturally bound dimensions of moral intuitions (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 88). The Virtues Project identifies itself as “a multi-cultural initiative” (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2005, pp. Workshops-45), and, in contrast to some of the interpretations of it in academic circles, it claims that it is “not about the practices or beliefs of any particular religion” (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. xxi).
The third layer is the personal level of moral thinking that derives its diversity from the personal interpretations of traditions, multiple traditions and social practices, or even “quirky individuality,” which is more prominent in modern liberal democratic societies (Isaacs, 2010, pp. 125-126; Nussbaum, 2013, p. 200; C. Taylor, 1989, p. 17). Virtues language and practice creates the moral space for individual interpretations, which can be creative, quirky, improvised or traditional. The personal level, as in the phenomenological experience of life, is embedded in the cultural and, further, in what Taylor has identified as the universal.

Taylor’s historical and cultural retrieval of the modern self uncovers buried moral goods through rearticulation, aiming to bring back into moral reflection the moral sources that originally motivated these moral goods to reinvigorate and empower the human spirit once again (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 520). The Virtues Project does not focus on the moral sources but on the virtues that all have in common. It acknowledges its moral sources and then gives an account of virtues drawn from their research of diverse sacred texts and traditions. However, it does not give an account of the exploration and articulation conducted into these moral sources. In contrast to Taylor, it emphasizes the practice and acknowledgement of those elemental features of the three axes of moral thinking to cultivate moral flourishing for everyone (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2005, pp. Workshops-46).

Taylor’s three axes of moral thinking embraces moral pluralism because they serve as the point of “contact unity” to create the initial merging of horizons that makes cross-cultural dialogue and relationship possible (Abbey, 2000, p. 68; C. Taylor, 1989, pp. 14-15). Kavelin-Popov states a concern for introducing “values without offending people of diverse belief systems,” and puts forward the focus on virtues development through practice and acknowledgment as a simple solution to
moral pluralism because the virtues are universally valued by all cultures (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. xix). Describing The Virtues Project as a movement that focuses on virtues development to encourage students “to be at their best,” Kavelin-Popov situates the virtues as the elements for a fusion of moral horizons (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. xv).

The Virtues Project understands that our shared vulnerability to the violence we bring to bear on each other is preventable through a common focus on the virtues and advocates its strategies as possible tools for strengthening children, youth and adults to develop a more positive purpose in their lives to do away with violence. In so doing, a tacit acknowledgement is given to the substantive aspects of Taylor’s axes for moral thinking in a basic universal morality, which are respect for others, the living of a meaningful life, and the kind of dignity that commands the respect of others (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 15).

**Summary**

The first research question posed in this thesis—To what extent is there resonance between The Virtues Project and the moral form of life as articulated in the Tayloren account?—was explored in this chapter. The Virtues Project is not underpinned by a conception of a detached rational self, or a moral form of life that is understood in terms of instrumental reason and detached ethical decision-making. In Tayloren terms, an interpretive relational self underpins it, as well as a moral form of life characterised by strong evaluations of moral goods, expressed in virtues terms.
From the standpoint of Taylor’s philosophical anthropology of the self, The Virtues Project has an understanding of the self as interpretive and relational. Virtues language is a narrative tool that makes plausible interpretations of, and gives acknowledgement to, virtues in practice. Virtues are irreducible moral elements in interpretations of our lives. The acknowledgement and practice of virtues bring purpose and meaning to a life and are a cause for moral flourishing. Virtues language is a dialogical and relational engagement between the carer, who makes a virtues language statement, and the cared for, who practices the virtues. Virtues practice is the material embodiment of the virtues, so will always be diverse while its motivating virtue will be commonly understood. The acknowledgement and practice of virtues in a community protects human vulnerability.

From the standpoint of Taylor’s phenomenological philosophical account of the moral form of life, The Virtues Project understands moral life to be characterised by strong evaluations of moral goods expressed in virtues terms. Virtues language is a tool that can assist in the moral quest for a more believable moral framework that is respectful of others. The moral beauty we see in the virtues can have different underlying moral sources for each of us, making virtues a doorway through which people with diverse moral interpretations can enter into dialogical relationships in which a fusion of moral horizons might occur. Virtues are elemental to our conceptions of respect for others, our pursuit of a meaningful life, and our sense of dignity; they are elemental to our identity. Virtues are together goods and underpin all social practices. Virtues language and practice are a relational practical reason that results in a plausible narrative. The engrossment required for virtues language stimulates internal practical reason on the understanding and practice of virtues. The Virtues Project acknowledges its moral sources as the diverse sacred texts and
cultural traditions of the world, and gives accounts of virtues synthesized from them. It does not give an account of the exploration and articulation of these moral sources and leaves individuals and communities to make their own retrieval, perhaps internally, of the moral sources that underpin their sense of moral beauty when they talk about and practice the virtues.

From the standpoint of moral engagement issues that arise out of Taylor’s account, The Virtues Project understands moral engagement in a school context in nurturative and integrative terms, as expressive-collaborative, and as encounters with moral beauty. The Virtues Project strategies are a nurturative form of power when teachers use them for students, making it similar to care ethics in education. The strategies are an integrative form of power when teachers and students use them with each other and with students. Virtues language opens and keeps open moral space by replacing disempowering language with empowering language. The interpretation of virtues in narrative and practice is an expressive-collaborative mode of morality in which virtues understandings are negotiated and each becomes accountable to the other to realize their own virtues potential. The strategies do not coerce, they invite teachers and students to cultivate virtues through the recognition of virtues in practice and remembering encounters with the moral beauty of virtues through virtues acknowledgments and practice.

From the standpoint of cross-cultural considerations that arise out of Taylor’s account, the Virtues Project strategies make virtues a doorway to a fusion of horizons. There is minimal engagement with virtues accounts from diverse moral sources except through reflection on the virtues cards, though students are unaware of this. Historical and cultural moral sources of a person and community are the background context in the interpretive work that goes on in virtues language and
practice, though awareness of this is not given expression through the strategies. A fusion of moral horizons, even in cross-cultural contexts, might occur for moral interlocutors who engage in a dialogue of virtues language and practice. However, the strategies only require the recognition of virtues, they do not require the articulation of moral sources and ontological claims about the virtues. This may mean that the strategies are insufficient for diverse peoples to bridge the ontological divides in cross-cultural contexts. The Virtues Project does not give an account of the exploration and articulation of its moral sources; it only acknowledges that they are in the sacred texts and cultural traditions of the world. The Virtues Project emphasizes the practice and acknowledgement of virtues to cultivate moral flourishing in respecting others, living a meaningful life, and personal and community dignity. Its virtues language strategy dialogically links love for morally beautiful virtues to their expression in practice. The Virtues Project claims that a common focus on virtues can prevent the development of violence in relationships, though this might only be true for a community that draws on common moral sources.

This ontological and ethical exploration of The Virtues Project indicates that its implementation in a school context might give rise to moral flourishing. This leads to the second question posed for this thesis—How feasible is it for The Virtues Project to be realized in a school context, given that it was originally a family program? The case study in this thesis explores its education coherence. In the early years of the Virtues Project development it was not only adaptable to but also strongly influenced by cross-cultural immersion. There are numerous cross-cultural contexts in which The Virtues Project has been implemented. However, no academic research exploring these implementations has been entered into. The case study school is
based in Mongolia, giving the opportunity for exploring the third question posed by this thesis—To what extent might The Virtues Project resonate with a cultural context dissimilar to the North American cultural context of its development? The next chapter turns to the methodology of the narrative research case study of the experience of a Mongolian school implementing The Virtues Project.
Chapter 5: A Narrative Case Study Methodology

Introduction

The case for a narrative research approach to the case study draws on the narrative ethics in the Tayloren account related in Chapter Three. The method and analysis of the case study align with this account in order to explore the educational and cross-cultural coherence of The Virtues Project. Moral being and becoming is always situated in a web of interlocutors. Our sense of being and becoming is negotiated in our community of interlocutors in an expressive-collaborative mode. There are different roles in the web of interlocutors for the case study. The case for narrative inquiry discusses the roles of the educators as narrative contributors, the role of the translators of the educators’ narratives, and the researcher’s roles as narrative inquirer and re-teller. The researcher also had the role of Virtues Project facilitator, a situation of potential conflict of interest. This is noted and explained further.

The narrative contributors focus on the web of interlocutors that comprise the case study school, which is located in Ulaanbaatar, the capital city of Mongolia. The 11 educators who are the narrative contributors in the case study are embedded in a Mongolian history and culture that only recently entered into the international arena. Their narratives focus on the experiences of being trained in, implementing and training others in The Virtues Project over a period of 21 months from 2008 to 2010. (Refer to Appendix B for an Overview of the Research Design. Refer to Appendix F
for the narrative case study timeline. Refer to Appendix G for narrative contributor descriptions, specific interview and research journal dates, specific dates for professional development meetings and workshops dates, types and who conducted them. Refer to Appendix H for interview question sets and dates conducted.)

The purpose of the case study is to explore the educational and cross-cultural coherence of The Virtues Project. Coherence is found in narrative plausibility, which requires the narrative inquirer to be open to the voice of the narrative contributor to understand their sense of being and becoming and the coherence of The Virtues Project for them. The Listening Guide is the analysis method chosen for this narrative case study because it is open to voice. The final part of this chapter discusses the Listening Guide and the adaptations made to it in order to listen to the many voices situated in the same web of interlocutors going through the experience of The Virtues Project in their school together. (Refer to Appendix I for the adopted and adapted Listening Guide analysis process, and for the themes the educational and cross-cultural articulations of the school’s engagement with The Virtues Project.)

**The Case for a Narrative Research Case Study**

The dominant scientific research tradition, arising out of the scientific revolution of the eighteen and nineteenth centuries, is based on interpretations about truth as outside of, and yet underpinning, nature. Central to these interpretations is the “rhetoric of objectivity,” as Bruner terms it, which conceals “that the so-called data of science are constructed observations that are designed with a point of view in mind” (Bruner, 2004, p. 94). Research terms such as validity, generalizability or reliability have specific meanings in the scientific tradition. Milligan replaces these
with “seek explanation, authenticity, adequacy and plausibility” as more appropriate terminology for the narrative mode of research (Milligan, 2008, p. 112). The objective mode interprets the narrative mode as particular and drawn from too small a sample to be statistically valid or generalizable. The narrative mode is considered to be subjective, or inter-subjective, and because of its focus on particularity is not reproducible, valid or proof of the enduring nature of things (Milligan, 2008, p. 111). Bruner argues that “the two (though complementary) are irreducible to one another. Efforts to reduce one mode to the other or to ignore one at the expense of the other inevitably fail to capture the rich diversity of thought” (Bruner, 1986, p. 11).

The objective mode of research thinking raises questions about the narrative mode in the field of moral education. Why should moral education turn to narrative research when quantitative research has the power to present a compelling plausibility? What kind of plausibility does narrative present that gives the stories we tell the power to morally inspire us without recourse to quantifiable evidence? Addressing these questions is to address the very nature of relationships in research, particularly between researchers and human subjects.

Narrative is embedded in human relationships, connecting the narrator to others through language and dialogue. The people in relationship in narrative research are not just the participants. The narrative researcher is also a member in the narrative research project’s web of interlocutors and therefore a collaborator. Collaborative research “relationships are joined,” according to Clandinin et al., “by the narrative unities of our lives” (Clandinin & Connelly, 1988, p. 281). Narrative as inquiry is a method, yet narrative ethics, explains Isaacs, is “a way of seeing, or characterising, significant features of ethical engagement” (Isaacs, 2007, p. 1). The context richness of narrative, then, makes it appropriate for inquiry involving
embedded and embodied human beings. This narrative research case study is understood as a collaborative engagement with numerous narrating interlocutors: namely, the interpreting and narrating contributors, researcher and translators.

The Interpreting and Narrating Participant

Narrative is at the core of the construction of self and the way life has meaning for us because we are interpretive and dialogical beings relationally embedded with other interpretive and dialogical beings (C. Taylor, 1988, 1989). According to Taylor “we grasp our lives in a narrative,” and therefore our sense of, and orientation to, the “good” “has to be woven into my understanding of my life as an unfolding story” (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 47). Story, as narrative researchers Connelly and Clandinin describe it, “is a portal through which a person enters the world and by which his or her experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful” (Connelly & Clandinin, 2012, p. 477). The stories we tell others and ourselves are about who we are and who we want to become, what we have come to love and value, and how life has meaning for us. Stories, suggests Jones, “are not just representations of our lives lived; they are at one and the same time re-presenting and constituting reality” (Jones, 2012, p. 133). Stories, explains Isaacs, can “be seen as an inescapable feature of our being-in-the-world, of our strivings towards the good, and of our sense of self,” and are “highly textured and richly complex” (Isaacs, 2007, p. 19). “Narrating our lives,” he further states, “is a quest for coherence” (Isaacs, 2010, p. 139). Narrative inquirers Clandinin et al., have come to understand narrative “as both phenomenon and method” (Clandinin et al., 2006, p. 21); therefore, narrative research may have a validity of another kind, the plausibility of coherence—how we, and the world we live in, constitute our reality.
The stories we create about ourselves, and what the world around us means to us, are not just about ourselves and not completely our own interpretations. Stories are language mediated interpretations of particular experiences in particular places at a particular time by a particular person related to particular others. “The full definition of someone’s identity thus usually involves not only his stand on moral and spiritual matters,” writes Taylor, “but also some reference to a defining community” (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 36). Even if we never reveal to others some of our stories, they are still interpreted by us in a language that carries with it the shared understandings of a culture or of a particular group. We may validate, refine, or reject personal or shared understandings as we dialogically interpret what we experience. Internal or external, our interpretations inform all our stories. We are relationally embedded beings whose “lives unfold within webs of interconnection,” and at the same time we are narrative beings whose lives unfold dialogically in “webs of interlocution” (Isaacs, 2010, p. 139; C. Taylor, 1989, p. 36). Our interconnection with others therefore has an ethical dimension that is highlighted in the narratives within and about human engagement (Isaacs, 2010, p. 121). Narrative research that elicits personal narratives about human engagement has the potential to facilitate “the mining of complexities and multiple layers of interconnectedness that define and guide individual and communal moral frameworks” (Milligan, 2008, p. 74).

There were numerous participants in the case study, and not all were selected as narrative contributors to the analysis phase of the case study. Information about participation in the case study was given to, and consent forms were received from, all school members who participated in the case study activities. Copies of the information letter and consent forms, different for students and staff, can be found in
English and Mongolian in Appendices J, K and L. The University Human Research Ethics Committee at the Queensland University of Technology gave ethics clearance for the research case study. Permission to conduct the case study in the Mongolian school was received in writing from the director of the Education Institute in the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science in Mongolia, and from the director of the case study school.

**The Narrative Researcher**

The school community members, both collectively and independently, are in “the midst of stories” as the case study begins, and so, also, is the research inquirer (Clandinin, 2006, p. 47). The research project story purposefully enters into the school as part of an exploration of The Virtues Project, and then exits the school’s unfolding story to enter into the analysis phase of interpreting the teacher participants’ interwoven and overlapping stories about conceptualising and actualising this moral education program. The research project story itself lies in the midst of other stories, particularly that of the researcher’s own life, the engagement of particular groups of academic colleagues and a wider Mongolian community interested in moral education. Further, the narrative researcher’s engagement is not limited to the research project story, because researcher and participants enter into dialogical relationships with each other (Connelly & Clandinin, 2012, p. 480). As is the way of human beings positioned together in the same landscape, relationships are forged because of a “sense of responsibility and commitment to the work” (Clandinin, 2006, p. 47; Miller, 1996, pp. 145-146). The narrative research inquirer is an active participant with the research participants “who jointly construct narrative
and meaning” in narrative occasions, which aligns narrative inquiry practice more closely with ethnographic practice (Riessman, 2008, p. 23).

In this narrative research case study of a school implementing The Virtues Project, the narrative research inquirer’s function has been combined with a Virtues Project master facilitator role. Far from compromising this study, the researcher’s experience of being trained, and then training others in The Virtues Project as a part of the research, has provided an opportunity for an appreciative stance and a deeper engagement to delve into the ontological depths of the program. The trainer role was often distinguished from the researcher role during the case study. As the reins of training responsibility were taken over by the teacher participants, the initial emphasis as trainer gave way to researcher and interested colleague and friend. The closer engagement with the school and the teachers’ implementation experiences opened up a deeper sensitivity to the school landscape. Nevertheless, it also increased the risk of an interpreter’s blindness to the interpretations and deeper meanings in the narratives of the teacher participants. For this reason the analysis method was chosen with care to quieten the narrative researcher’s voice and to give space in the retelling to the voice of the Mongolian teachers.

The Narrative Translators

Mongolia had one China-trained Virtues Project facilitator with no facilitation experience at the time the case study school director agreed to involve his school in this research project. Galmaa was proficient in both Mongolian and English and held a master’s degree in education from a Mongolian university. She began her association with the research project by finding a school willing to be the subject of study. She was the main translator of the Virtues Project publications and workshop
training materials. She continued as translator and Virtues Project facilitator in training for nomination as a master facilitator, which she achieved by the time she left the fieldwork a year later when all the training workshops for the teacher participants had been completed. Both of these roles qualify her as a research participant, and at times her narrative is included in the schoolteachers’ narratives as a Mongolian educator collaborating in the construction of meaning. By the time the May 2009 teacher interviews were conducted she was very familiar with the interview style of eliciting narrative sharing from the teachers and conducted them on her own using the researcher-prepared question sets, interview guidelines and the video recording equipment. This varied the dynamics of the interviews in the case study and created a context for a possibly richer and deeper sharing in the Mongolian narratives uninterrupted by the need for English translation with a non-Mongolian interlocutor. Galmaa’s return visit to the school after six months absence created an opportunity for the final group interview as a celebratory sharing of uninterrupted Mongolian narratives with their Mongolian colleague who had previously held the role of assistant trainer and researcher. On this occasion, the principal researcher served afternoon tea and managed the video recording.

Galmaa, and the five other translators that followed her, translated for the researcher during the narrative occasions. All but one of them were educators. Galmaa and the four educator translators transcribed and translated the video recordings into English narrative texts. These Mongolian translators played a key role to “critically shape the stories participants chose to tell” (Riessman, 2008, p. 50). Schulz et al. understand transcriptions of teacher narrative occasions “to be a small part of a lifelong process of understanding our teaching practices” (Schulz, Schroeder, & M. Brody, 1997, p. 478). The research design included this
researcher’s consistent habit of recording in journals what was being translated during interviews, meetings and workshops, and noting observations during lessons that were transcribed and translated later. There were always debriefing sessions between the narrative research inquirer and translator, or the Mongolian narrative inquirer, after these narrative occasions. This practice of working closely with narrative occasion and transcription translators is strongly advised in the literature on narrative methods (Riessman, 2008, p. 42). Numerous discussions occurred between researcher and translator about nuances of meaning of particular Mongolian words and phrases that became important for the analysis phase of the case study. During the analysis phase, the video recordings would be used to clarify what speakers had said and some translators would be further consulted to clarify discrepancies between transcription/translator word choices and researcher journal records. These strategies were made to ensure consistency in, and reliability of, the narrative texts for the analysis phase and the narrative retelling in Chapters Six and Eight.

**Inquiring Into the Narratives of Others**

Acknowledging the roles of the participants, the researcher and the translators in the case study follows on from Taylor’s statement that “a self can never be described without some reference to those who surround it” (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 35). In this case study, the teacher selves “being described” were surrounded by the case study team that accompanied their engagement with The Virtues Project. The narrative inquirers were dialogical partners as the teachers orally constructed their narratives. The translators turned the narrative occasions into English narrative texts. The researcher conducted the analysis of the translated texts of their stories and created a retelling to reveal the ontological in the educational and cross-cultural
experience. Careful efforts were made in the case study design to stay true to the interpreting and narrating participant voices. The relationships in the case study were respectful of the dignity of each person, and the inquiring researcher and translators were mindful of their main roles as listeners rather than tellers in narrative contribution engagements, and as listeners and re-tellers in the narrative transcriptions and translations, and then narrative analysis.

An exploration of the implementation of a moral education approach in a school context is richly enhanced by narrative research. Narrative research in moral education in this context appraises narratives of school participants about their moral education experiences, narratives that necessarily involve their interpretations of the moral landscape in which they are embedded and their stance and orientation within it. The narrative contributions expose the ontological and ethical understandings of the participants as well as the moral education approach they implement. In so doing, it may also elucidate features, dimensions or insights of interest for moral education research and practice in general.

**The Mongolian School Case Study**

Serendipity had a significant part to play in bringing this research project into a Mongolian school, yet the fit became a significant contribution to this exploration of The Virtues Project. The school context is familiar, yet the cultural context is unfamiliar. In this nexus of the familiar and the unfamiliar the contrast brings into sharper relief the ontological features of a school’s educational engagement with The Virtues Project. The cultural facet to this particular case study opens a crucial
dimension for this kind of exploration—the exploration of cross-cultural dimensions of The Virtues Project.

**The Narrative Case Study Design**

The Mongolian school was located in Ulaanbaatar, the largest city in the country, and had over 50 teaching staff. None had previously ever heard of The Virtues Project. The case study formally began with a two-day training workshop for all staff—teaching, management, ancillary and support staff. Training continued to be a component throughout the case study, though training activity progressively shifted from researcher to participant. The initial workshop was videoed to set the scene for all future interactions with the research project in the school. Staff and students quickly became familiar with the video equipment as part of being involved with the research, whether it was in training sessions, class lessons, meetings or interview situations. Video recordings provided the opportunity to build a collection of narratives for exploration purposes. These recordings flowed from both the training and implementation activities the teachers requested and created. The case study design was flexible and opportunistic about recording field texts, something that Clandinin suggests narrative inquirers should be open to (Clandinin, 2006, p. 48).

The initial training took place at the invitation of the school management team, which resulted in the creation of a professional development group, who then became the research participants. This initial phase was anticipated and planned for in the research design, but thereafter the case study became the subject of a negotiation between the researcher, who was also the principal trainer, the professional development team, and the school’s management team. Initially the meetings of the
professional development team were entirely devoted to training events led by the principal trainer. Consistent with the research intention, these meetings gradually became professional reflection and planning events led by the teachers themselves. The first unanticipated request, to provide demonstration lessons with students for teachers to observe, led to the creation of extracurricular demonstration workshops for students in which the teachers were given the role of being active student teachers rather than observers. It necessitated observing the typical lessons of teachers for the trainer to understand the particular nature of the teaching and learning approaches common in the school, and the constraints within which education could take place, such as time restrictions and limited resources. As teachers began planning their own joint and individual activities to implement the Virtues Project strategies they invited the trainer/researcher to create video records of their lessons and activities.

Another unanticipated request came from the school’s director (principal). He was particularly concerned with empirically tracking the improvements in the school as the teachers implemented The Virtues Project. The result of this negotiation was his choice to implement a moral climate survey called CREE,\textsuperscript{15} which was translated into Mongolian and conducted three times, in October 2008, March 2009 and February 2010. Though not a part of this research project, it was a part of the case study experience and gave rise to opportunities for interviews, most particularly with the director himself.

Serendipity continued to be a part of the case study. As teachers became more confident and experienced in The Virtues Project, they became ready for further training and opportunities to become trainers themselves. At first, these training

\textsuperscript{15} The Collective Responsibility for Excellence and Ethics (CREE), version 2.7, was obtained from the Institute for Excellence and Ethics (http://www.excellenceandethics.com/) in the Centre for the 4\textsuperscript{th} and 5\textsuperscript{th} R’s at Cortland University in 2009 (Khmelkov & Davidson, 2008).
opportunities were within the school and were opened up to interested others making requests of the research participants and translators. Later, the training capacities of the teachers and their aspirations for further recognition within The Virtues Project necessitated finding training opportunities outside the school. Teachers found their own outside opportunities, and the advent of a swine flu outbreak created a unique time space for teachers to take advantage of their unexpected teacher-only days. Networking with other teachers brought two other inner city schools together, resulting in an ever-widening reach for the professional development team established in the case study school. The training events within the school were videoed and, if the trainer/researcher was present in off-campus workshops, research notes were taken. If the researcher was not present, then the research participants were asked to relate their experiences in professional development meetings and interviews.

The narrative texts of the case study fell into two parts: as a record of events and as narrative contributions to the analysis phase of the case study. Treating research interviews as narrative occasions, advises Riessman, requires “the interviewer’s emotional attentiveness and engagement and the degree of reciprocity in the conversation” (Riessman, 2008, p. 23). The need for attentiveness, engagement and reciprocity applied as much within the interviews as outside them in all research project engagements within the school. There was a constant dialogue of collaboration with respect to the research, as well as training opportunities, which surfaced from time to time during the school’s implementation of The Virtues Project.

Five sets of interviews were generated on five different occasions in response to the pulse of the implementation story of the school. The first set occurred after the
creation of some student demonstration workshops for the teachers and students, but before the establishment of a “virtues lessons” initiative. Teachers and the school management team were asked to give their own assessment of how teachers understood and implemented the concepts and strategies of The Virtues Project and what kind of impact The Virtues Project might be having in the school. The second set of interviews occurred in May 2009, after the teachers had attended a Virtues Project three-day facilitator training, and presented the teacher participants with the choice of speaking on a wide range of topics related to moral education, each with a collection of guiding questions. The third set of interviews occurred in November 2009 after the implementation of activities that were planned in the three-day training workshop and just as the opportunity arose to conduct Virtues Project training in another school. Questioning focused on opening up narrative on their plans for implementation in the new school year and what experiences the participants might share with the new teachers they were about to train. The fourth set of interviews occurred in February 2010 and came after the teacher participants had experienced training teachers in another school, conducting parent training in The Virtues Project, and experiencing a series of lesson observations of teachers sharing their integration of various strategies into the classroom. Questions were focused on eliciting narratives from the participant teachers as they reflected on their engagement with The Virtues Project in their school. The fifth occasion was an opportunity for a recounting of the turning points, highlights and insights gained together as research participants and members of the Virtues Connection team. It was held outside the school, in comfortable and private surroundings, as a series of interview-like presentations the group had planned together, with each taking on stories more intimately linked to them personally as they recounted the story of the
school’s implementation of The Virtues Project. Interview question sets are listed in Appendix H.

**The Narrative Contributors**\(^{16}\)

In 2008 there was one Mongolian who had attended both a two-day introduction and three-day facilitator training to become a Virtues Project facilitator in Beijing, China. Galmaa was a social worker in Ulaanbaatar and part of the Social Workers Association of Mongolia. Though she was working in an NGO, generally social workers\(^{17}\) are found in school management teams along with the director and one or two training managers. Galmaa found a colleague who currently held a position as a school social worker who was very interested in both The Virtues Project and the research project and was willing to arrange a meeting between the researcher, herself, her director and the school training manager. It was at this hour-long presentation meeting of both The Virtues Project and the research project that the director agreed to invite the research project into his school. Although the school social worker was instrumental in paving the way for workshops, meetings and activities for The Virtues Project and its research requirements, the director approved everything before it could take place.

The first research participants, then, were the director, Batukhan, and the social worker, Asralt. All staff and students who attended any of the workshops or were in lessons that were video recorded were considered as research participants and went

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\(^{16}\) See Appendix G for the list of Narrative Contributors and Transcript Listings.

\(^{17}\) After the sudden withdrawal of comprehensive social, educational and welfare systems during the exit of a Russian presence in Mongolia, children became particularly vulnerable. Save the Children UK first trained local government children’s workers in 1994, many of who had been pioneer leaders as teachers during socialism. The role became established as professional social worker positions now legally required in schools and other social services focused on the care and development of children in Mongolia (Save the Children UK, 2009).
through an informed consent process (see later in this chapter). At the first two-day Virtues Project introductory workshop, teachers were offered the opportunity to attend follow-on professional development meetings. There were 18 staff of mixed age and experience in the school who attended the first of these meetings. At this first meeting a request was made for the researcher to conduct demonstration lessons. The way this request could be negotiated within the school timetable had an impact on who could realistically give their time to this professional development initiative. The demonstration lessons were structured as extracurricular activities that occurred outside of the normal lesson timetable, which was from 8.00am to 1.30pm for the secondary school section, so they would not interfere with regular subject timetables. This precluded primary school teachers, who taught in the afternoon, from attending. Secondary school teachers who had hectic meeting schedules or were involved in other extracurricular activities were also unable to attend.

The narratives of 11 school staff were chosen for the analysis phase. They were selected for their role in the implementation of The Virtues Project and the range of narrative texts that their involvement made available. The first of these was Director Batukhan, whose responsibility in the school was to “guide,” as he described it, the direction of development in the school. His role in welcoming the research project into the school, and his continued interest as “guide” for the development of beneficial projects within the school, gave encouragement and confidence to the teachers who became intimately involved in The Virtues Project and the research project running concurrently with it. The other school management team member was the social worker, Asralt. She took responsibility for the day-to-day contact with the research project and understood her role as “looking after the rights of the child,” as she described it. She encouraged the teachers who gave their time to implementing
The Virtues Project and often sat alongside them in workshops and meetings. She made herself available for many meetings and interviews, and facilitated the locations of training and research events. Her example and endorsement was a strong encouragement for the establishment of The Virtues Project in the school. Batukhan’s and Asralt’s narratives provided the perspective of the school management team for the analysis phase.

The remaining nine contributors to the narrative analysis phase were all secondary school teachers. A grade six homeroom teacher and science teacher, Enkhturleg, became a key figure in the Virtues Connection team more by default than any initial motivation. A homeroom teacher has an assigned class and classroom and is responsible for the general care of her or his class. Enkhturleg was helpful, a personal value she held in high esteem, in making her centrally-located classroom available for the student demonstration workshops, though she could not be present in the room at the time due to her commitments as grade coordinator. The location of the student demonstration workshops encouraged many of the students from her class to join in, or they were respectfully present in the room working on other tasks and engaged in periphery learning. It was the change she saw in her students that drew her into full commitment to the Virtues Connection team despite her time commitments in other areas of the school. Two mathematics teachers were committed Virtues Connection team members from the first meeting, and both contributed in significant ways to the implementation of The Virtues Project. Bileg-Oyun was the first to offer her lesson, into which she had integrated some of the strategies of The Virtues Project, for video observation. Her example of mentoring other teachers and openness to sharing her experiences strongly set the tone of collaboration in the group. Ireedui was the youngest teacher and newest staff member
in the school. Her involvement in every Virtues Project activity and her full commitment to the requirements of the research project highlighted for the director her strong dedication as a teacher where she might have otherwise been a background figure. Two English language teachers were also very committed Virtues Connection team members. Bolormelmiinii was eventually identified as the Virtues Project Coordinator in the school because she was a natural magnet bringing loving-kindness into the close-knit team. Tsogzolboo added another dimension to the group. At first she was not involved because her interest in the school and education in general had reached a very low point. Her gradual involvement and eventual enthusiasm indicated that there was a dynamic energy in the group that she had longed for in her teaching experience. These five narrative contributors comprised the core of the Virtues Connection team and were the most active facilitators alongside Asralt. Their narratives provided rich “chalkface” stories that revealed rich interpretations of The Virtues Project strategies arising out of their intimate and regular experience across the range of activities, and particularly in training other teachers.

The remaining four narrative contributors were involved in the implementation of The Virtues Project and the training events, following on from the leadership of the core of the Virtues Connection team. Two information technology teachers also formed part of the Virtues Connection team. Their engagement in the digital education of students and teachers provided a different classroom and training experience to the traditional lecture style most teachers in the school used. Two history teachers also joined the Virtues Connection team, though both were unable to be consistent in their involvement. Bat-Erdene, also a grade six homeroom teacher, became ill in early 2009 and was away from school for a number of months as a
result. On his return to school he resumed his involvement in The Virtues Project and the research project, being amongst the first teachers to be trained as a Virtues Project facilitator by the other teachers who were aspiring to become master facilitators. Battsooj had stepped in as Bat-Erdene’s relieving teacher and his attendance in the Virtues Connection team meetings dropped off as a result of his new responsibility. He continued to make himself available for interviews, and his narrative contribution became valuable as one of the less-involved teachers in the school.

The narrative contributors were representative of the Mongolian school in that the teachers involved were those more intimately involved in the implementation of The Virtues Project. They were not working in isolation from others and their full narrative sharing revealed their relational engagement with students, other teachers and parents. Their story came from the perspective of Mongolian teachers fully engaged in implementing The Virtues Project and therefore valuable narrative contributors for the purposes of the second and third research questions shaping this exploration.

**Case Study Procedure and Timeline**

The case study began in August 2008 with the first two-day Virtues Project introductory workshop for all the school staff. It closed 21 months later in April 2010 with the Virtues Project facilitators sharing their reflections with the first Mongolian Virtues Project facilitator who had served the research project as translator through the first 12 months. The first phase focused on the familiarization of the school with The Virtues Project and in six months all staff had received at least introductory training. Professional development meetings—or Virtues Connections—were also
established and the first round of student demonstration workshops were completed. The second phase followed for the next two months and was distinguished by the recognition by teacher participants that close relationships had developed between staff and students involved in the familiarization phase. Overlapping the last month of the second phase was a period marked by the establishment of moral education activities in the school using the Virtues Project strategies and, in particular, the language of the virtues. The following 11 months constituted the fourth phase of the case study, defined by the process where some of the teachers became Virtues Project facilitators and their subsequent experiences in training others. The fifth and final phase of the case study, of two months duration, was signalled by the teachers reaching beyond the school community to train many different others in The Virtues Project.

During the five phases of the case study 159 narrative transcripts in both Mongolian and English were produced. As previously mentioned, they were categorized into two types. The first was as a record of events, serving as a reminder and confirmation of timing and order of events. These were transcribed and translated video recordings of training workshops conducted for and by school staff, parent training workshops conducted by school staff, observed lessons, student demonstration workshops, translator interviews, student interviews and focus discussion groups, and an ancillary staff focus discussion group. Also translated were copies of student research journals, though these were difficult narrative texts to encourage students to use and then difficult to collect. The second type of narrative transcript was selected for the analysis phase of the case study and there were 73 of these in total. These included three teacher research journals, though most teachers were reluctant to share their journals or had too little time to record into them. Those
that were shared were copied and returned, and English translations were made. The remaining 70 narrative contributions were transcribed and translated video recordings of teacher and school management interviews, Virtues Connection meetings, teacher presentations in training workshops for other teachers, and a school management presentation at a moral education forum in Ulaanbaatar. Throughout the case study duration and beyond, researcher journals were kept of every event and meeting, and of relevant conversations in passing. In part, the researcher journals served as a backup if anything happened to the video recordings, and also as an alternate source to the video recordings for understanding the context of particular translated narrative texts. Appendix F provides a detailed record of the narrative transcripts collected during each phase.

The researcher conducted three of the five interview sets as narrative inquirer with the assistance of a translator. The first translator and Virtues Project facilitator in training, Galmaa, took on the role of assistant narrative inquirer to independently conduct one of the five interview sets in May 2009. She was given questions arranged around themes and trained to use them to allow the teachers being interviewed to select their own themes and to determine the flow of the interview. Several questions were presented in each theme set so that the narrative inquirer and narrator had enough to establish a relevant sharing narrative. The last of the five interview sets was conducted outside of the school in homely surrounds with the researcher hosting the event and managing the video recording equipment while leaving the narrators and their visiting Mongolian narrative inquirer, Galmaa, to establish their own narrative reflective sharing.

A small video recorder and tripod was used to make the video recordings, which were immediately downloaded onto a computer and a backup made.
Translators required copies of these video recordings for translation purposes and were requested to immediately delete these from their laptops once they had completed their translation task. They were constantly reminded to do so and asked to confirm when they did. All the video recordings have been kept in a safe location on an external hard drive and have not been made available to anyone other than the researcher without written permission from the participants involved in the recorded event. The transcripts have been kept in storage in digital form on the researcher’s computer and in a backup external hard drive with the video recordings.

The location of the majority of video recorded events was on the school site, with the exception of training workshops the teacher participants conducted for teachers from other schools, which were on a different school site, and the last interview set, which was conducted in a private home.

**The Listening Guide**

The purpose of this case study is to appraise the ontological dimensions in the educational and cross-cultural engagement of a Mongolian school community with The Virtues Project. This requires hearing in the teacher participants’ narratives their experiences as actors, interpreters and dialoguers in relationship with each other, the rest of the school community and beyond, embedded in a particular history and culture. The *Listening Guide* developed by Gilligan et al., (Gilligan et al., 2004), was the analysis method chosen for its sensitivity to these particular exploration needs. The *Listening Guide* recommends four successive readings of the narrative text and has the added flexibility of being applicable to the analysis of narrative contributions
that were connected through the relationships that constitute a professional community.

The *Listening Guide* method is a way of analysing qualitative interviews that is best used when one’s question requires listening to particular aspects of a person’s expression of her or his own complex and multi-layered individual experiences and the relational and cultural contexts within which they occur… This method requires the active engagement of the researcher throughout the analysis because it is intended to be a guide, or a set of steps that provide a basic frame, rather than a set of prescriptive rules to be followed. The researcher must make decisions with regard to how precisely to implement each step of this method in a particular research project. (Gilligan et al., 2004, p. 169)

**Preparing the Narrative Texts**

Within the narratives constructed in single interviews, or through a series of interviews from a single narrator, and then as part of a narrative connected in a community, are many stories that can overlap, run through, hark back, and look forward. Isaacs uses the metaphor of the fibres that constitute a quilt to describe the dialogues, conversations, stories and narratives of human life, seeing them as providing “colour, texture, tone, contrast and motif” just as the fibres do to express “the richness, sheen, pattern and meaning of the quilt” (Isaacs, 2010, p. 137). To use the *Listening Guide* effectively for the analysis of all the selected narrative texts in this case study, two groups of selected participant narrative texts were analysed in depth as detailed in the process in Appendix I. The remaining collections of participant narrative texts were read according to the four different listening modes outlined in the *Listening Guide* to locate narrative text excerpts with similar or different threads and themes as identified during the in-depth analysis of the first two collections. Jones explains that “each sequential listening suggested in *The Guide* is
an important step in interpreting the research interlocutors’ accounts, as it is through each step that different aspects of the story/s emerge” (Jones, 2012, p. 153).

**The First Listening**

Gilligan et al. suggest attending to the listener’s personal responses to the narrative text, “particularly bringing our own subjectivities into the process of interpretation from the start by identifying, exploring, and making explicit our own thoughts and feelings about, and associations with, the narrative being analysed” (Gilligan et al., 2004, p. 160). Milligan also recognises the “perspectival stance” of the narrative inquirer in the first step, noting that the narrative texts are “significantly formed and filtered through the multiple interpretive ‘eyes’ of the researcher” (Milligan, 2008, p. 76). Attending to the researcher’s response to the narrative texts acknowledges that “knowledge is never point of view-less” (Bruner, 1991, p. 3) and “the construction of any work always bears the mark of the person who created it” (Riessman, 1993, p. v). Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2006, p.15) further reinforce this aspect of social research noting

social reality is not “out there” waiting to be discovered and measured but rather it is relational and subjective, produced during the research process. The researcher is not assumed to be value neutral and objective, but rather an active participant, along with the research subjects in building the exploratory and explanatory knowledge. Likewise, the value of the research is not based on whether it is replicable but rather how it adds to our substantive knowledge on a particular subject. (Hesse-Beber & Leavy, 2006, p. 15)

This listening also includes recognising the plot (Gilligan et al., 2004, p. 160), which Jones suggests can “be thought of simultaneously as both a noun and a verb; the terrain we negotiate and the way we negotiate that terrain” (Jones, 2012, p. 157).
The Second Listening

The purpose of this listening, according to Gilligan et al., is “to press the researcher to listen to the participant’s first-person voice—to pick up its distinctive cadences and rhythms,” and also “to hear how this person speaks about him- or herself” (Gilligan et al., 2004, p. 162). Attending to the first-person voice recognises that “voice is the barometer of relationships because it connects the inner and the outer world” (Gilligan, 1996, p. 253). Narrating participants were also tracing other narrated participants in the community of the school case study, in places where the narrative texts shifted between “I,” “we” and “they”. The case study narrative texts showed the same seguing of the “I” voice into the “we” voice as Jones notes in her narrative texts (Jones, 2012, p. 244). The segue effect is reflective of Taylor’s claim that,

I am a self only in relation to certain interlocutors: in one way in relation to those conversation partners who were essential to my achieving self-definition; in another in relation to those who are now crucial to my continuing grasp of language of self-understanding—and, of course, these classes may overlap. A self exists only within what I call “webs of interlocution”. (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 36)

While the “I” voice in the narrative texts was found to segue into the “we” voice, at times it and the “we” voice were often set in contrast to a “they” voice. The webs of interlocution Taylor refers to are reflected in the network of groups and relationships of the school case study community revealed through the “I,” “we” and “they” voices in the narrative texts.
The Third Listening

The first two “listenings” of the *Listening Guide* are intended to be prescribed, and the third and fourth “listenings” are shaped by the research question (Gilligan et al., 2004, p. 159). For this case study, this means the latter two “listenings” were focused on narrative text evidence for the flourishing of moral education concerns—namely the self, the moral form of life and moral engagement—through the way The Virtues Project was conceptualised and actualised by the teacher narrators. These “listenings” also sought to appraise the Virtues Project’s plausibility in the Mongolian context of being selves situated in a particular moral form of life and in culturally constrained ways of morally engaging with others. Gilligan et al. instruct the listener to specify “the voices we will listen for and determine what the markers of a particular contrapuntal voice are or, more simply, how we will know this voice when we hear it” (Gilligan et al., 2004, p. 165). Locating the ethical “goods” and “harms” was helpful in identifying the immediate context that could later lead to identifying unfamiliar contrapuntal voices, as were the strong evaluations associated with the self, the “we” group, and the “they” group that featured in the stanzas, the micro-stories, making up the narrative texts. The familiar and unfamiliar ethical concerns identified in the Mongolian educational context facilitated the exploration of moral education concerns in the case study engagement.

It was difficult to identify the contrapuntal voices in the reading of the narrative texts without researching the culture and history of Mongolia to understand the nature of the embeddedness of the Mongolian teachers. Abbey’s interpretation of Taylor’s conceptions of a broader morality helped to shed light on the problems arising with applying the *Listening Guide* to narrative texts from a very different history, culture and language to that of the narrative inquirer.
Dialogue must be understood to encompass a broad range of human interactions or encounters or even imaginings. His dialogical perspective on the self includes not just actual conversations with one's fellow humans but also imagined or internalized conversations. (Abbey, 2000, p. 68)

The interpersonal and social narratives of the relationally and socially embedded narrative contributors had a plurality of complex voices not heard before by the narrative inquirer, voices that narrated exploitation, manipulation, competition, nurturing, integration, as well as those “master narratives, historical narratives, religious narratives, institutional narratives, social narratives, family narratives, contesting narratives, counter narratives, narratives of repair and restoration” (Isaacs, 2010, p. 134). The challenge for the foreign narrative inquirer is the lack of embeddedness within the same historical, cultural and lingual spaces of the narrative contributors and translators. Yet Taylor contends that even the narrator is incapable of fully articulating the self’s interpretations.

But the self’s interpretations can never be fully explicit. Full articulacy is an impossibility. The language we have come to accept articulates the issues of the good for us. But we cannot have fully articulated what we are taking as given, what we are simply counting with, in using this language. We can, of course, try to increase our understanding of what is implicit in our moral and evaluative language. (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 34)

The review of the Mongolian cultural and historical context of morality for the Mongolian teachers is presented in Chapter Seven. When put together with the unfamiliar ethical concerns embedded in the narrative texts, this historical retelling gives explanations for many aspects of the unfamiliar context of the ethical features analysed in the third listening for the retelling and analysis in Chapter Eight. Gilligan et al. do warn that “the development of these listenings for contrapuntal voices is an iterative process” (Gilligan et al., 2004, p. 168).
The Fourth Listening

The fourth listening is when “an interpretation of the interview or text is developed that pulls together and synthesizes what has been learned through the entire process and an essay or analysis is composed” (Gilligan et al., 2004, p. 168). They further suggest that “in a study that includes multiple interviews, these Listening Guide analyses may be examined in relationship to one another, illuminating similarities in the themes that may begin to emerge across several interviews and also marking distinct differences between them” (Gilligan et al., 2004, p. 169).

The fourth listening anchors the presentation in the following three chapters, as two key stories derived from the case study. The first reveals the ontological depths of the participant narrative texts in the second area of the thesis that appraises the education coherence of The Virtues Project. The third area of exploration, the cross-cultural coherence of The Virtues Project, begins with an historical story of embedded Mongolian ontology and ethics that seeks to expound on what being Mongolian today might mean for the narrating participant teachers. It is followed by the second story arising out of the narrative research case study focused on the ontological dimensions of the dialogical and experiential engagement between the Mongolian participants’ cultural interpretations and their interpretations of The Virtues Project. Narrative research stories are fibres in the quilts of narrative lives, they are woven from the fibres of narrated lives, including their own. Their stories contribute to the richness of life that comes from telling stories.

This reading, along with the other three readings… posits subjects-in-relation, subjects with a “fundamental dependence on the webs of interlocution that constitute it”… and narrated subjects that are structurally located within grand
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or macro-level narratives. These stories rely, in turn, on how researchers re-tell and reconfigure them… this is not a coherent plot that moves predictably from beginning to end. Rather, because one’s life narrative exists in a web of narratives with the stories that others will tell to make sense of themselves, there will always be “retelling, remembering, and reconfiguring.” (Doucet & Mauthner, 2008, pp. 406-407)

For this reason it is important to remember that as a re-teller of narratives, however they have been analysed, there is a need to proceed with “all possible humility when asking what [narrative analysis] can bring to stories” (Frank, 2002, p. 13). Bruner points out that rather than verifiability, “narrative ‘truth’ is judged by verisimilitude” (Bruner, 2002, pp. 51-52). The rigor that the Listening Guide promotes, the integrity of the narrative re-teller, the narrative inquirers and the narrative translators, are the foundations on which the retelling in the following chapters stand. Schulz et al. state “that building caring relationships has transformed the way I retell their stories in a way that is more responsible to the teacher-participants” (Schulz et al., 1997, p. 479). Huber and Clandinin also found in their relational narrative inquiries that there is a “moral responsibility not only to the living but also in the kinds of research texts we construct,” adding that such texts are “always telling of only a moment in time and place in a person’s life” (Huber & Clandinin, 2002, p. 798), or the life of a community, as is the case with this case study.

About Narrative Research Texts

Narrative research texts are narratives in themselves, reinterpretations of the narrated interpretations of human experiences. Because they are reinterpretations serving a research inquiry, Connelly and Clandinin argue that they “require evidence, interpretive plausibility, logical constructions, and disciplined thought” (Connelly &
Clandinin, 2012, p. 485). They elsewhere explain that narrative inquiry “is aimed at understanding and making meaning of experience,” a way of “experiencing the experience” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 80). Bruner argues that “a life as led is inseparable from a life as told …a life is not ‘how it was’ but how it is interpreted and reinterpreted, told and retold” (Bruner, 1987, p. 31). For Connelly and Clandinin this feature of narrative is also a feature of writing a research text, which they see as a “narrative act,” and further, that “in a different time, in a different social situation, and for different purposes, a different research text might be written. There is no ultimate finality, or limiting truth, in the particular research texts written” (Connelly & Clandinin, 2012, p. 485). Narrative research texts in education, for example, are narrative acts that value the experience of teachers and the stories they tell, and further, as Schultz claims, “narrative inquiry validates teachers’ experiences and the ways they learn from their practice” (Schulz et al., 1997, p. 483). Narrative research is the act of retelling and reinterpreting in ways that “pay special attention to, and make explicit, the social significance” of the particular experiences and stories of others to “the larger body of literature to which their inquiry makes a contribution” (Connelly & Clandinin, 2012, p. 485).

Summary

This narrative research case study is of a familiar and yet unfamiliar Mongolian school implementing The Virtues Project. The purpose of the case study is to appraise the educational and cross-cultural dimensions of the school’s engagement with The Virtues Project. Five different interview sets were collected over a period of 21 months in what can be considered as logical phases in the case study.
Alongside these formal interviews were numerous other occasions for narrative recording, transcribed and translated into English, some of which stood as a record of events, and others, particularly the professional development meetings, became part of the narrative contributions. The narrative contributions of 11 school staff were selected for the analysis phase of the case study. Narrative lies at the heart of the crucial moral concerns of moral education, namely the interpretations of the self, the moral form of life and moral engagement. The interpreting and narrating participant, the narrative researcher, and the narrative translators have all contributed to the narrative texts arising out of the case study as contributions for the narrative analysis.

The *Listening Guide* was selected to conduct the analysis of the narrative texts. The Guide’s four steps, or listenings, have been adapted in ways that the flexibility of the analysis method allowed. In the second listening, the “I,” “we” and “they” voices were all listened to. The difficulty of hearing the historical and cultural contrapuntal voices of the Mongolian narrators was overcome in two ways: firstly, by listening for the ethical goods and harms; and, secondly, by recognising the need to research the basis of Mongolian morality in its culture and history. The exploration of the Virtues Project’s educational coherence was greatly assisted by an analysis of the ethical features inherent in the engagement. The analysis of this aspect of the research project is presented in Chapter Six. Chapter Seven presents an interpretation of the cultural and historical embeddedness of Mongolian morality. Chapter Eight is a narrative analysis of the exploration of the Virtues Project’s cross-cultural coherence, which drew on the ethical features analysis in the third step of the *Listening Guide* in combination with the cultural and historical research of Chapter Seven.
Chapter 6: A Mongolian School Engagement With The Virtues Project

Introduction

The original narrative contributions from the case study described in Chapter Five form the foundation for this narrative retelling. Excerpts from this body of work have been purposefully selected through the Listening Guide analysis process for the ethical features they reveal. The individual narrative contributions have many stories running through them and it is not possible, or desirable, to tell all these stories. However, two important meta-stories, drawn from these narrative contributions, are being told in this thesis. The first one is told in this chapter, and its purpose is to place the Mongolian school’s implementation experience of The Virtues Project under a critical analytical gaze using the lens of an ontological account of the ethical. The rich thread of story told here focuses on the ontological concern of any moral education approach, its educational coherence in a school setting. The Mongolian school’s engagement with The Virtues Project is primarily one of flourishing, of being and becoming as selves, relationships and community. It also points towards The Virtues Project being and becoming an emergent social practice within Mongolia.

This Virtues Project story unfolded in the school in five phases during the case study time period. Teachers first realised they could become better selves, and then they developed close relationships with each other. Teacher relationships with
students became transformed by the morally nurturing ethic fostered by the implementation of The Virtues Project, and this flowed on to other relationships in the school community. Finally, the school community reached beyond its borders into the wider community, including other educational arenas. The structure of each of the five sections is in two parts: the narrative context, which sets the scene and briefly describes the events of that phase; and the ontological interpretation of the teachers’ narratives. Despite this story having many narrators, the final responsibility for this interpretation rests with the narrative re-teller.

**Teachers Becoming Better Selves**

The first phase of the Mongolian School’s engagement with The Virtues Project is distinguished by the teachers’ experience of becoming better selves. In realising their own becoming as better selves, the vulnerabilities of the particular cohort of teachers engaging with The Virtues Project were revealed. The flourishing of better selves was accompanied by a sense of empowerment—energy the teachers applied to morally purposeful action as teachers and staff members in their school.

**The Narrative Context**

The school year began in early September as the summer ended and the autumn colours appeared in the trees and grasses. In the second month of school, the Virtues Project two-day introductory course, The Gifts of Character, was held over two consecutive Saturdays as the first snow lay on the ground. All the staff—the teachers from the secondary and primary sections of the school, members of the school’s management team, the ancillary administration staff, and even the
maintenance crew and cleaners—were required to attend by Director Batukhan, who also attended the first set of sessions himself. In all, 48 staff completed the full course, of which 25 were secondary school teachers, and a total of 83 staff attended at least half of the sessions. Social Worker Asralt and 30 teachers expressed interest in attending a future three-day facilitator training course, and 18 teachers indicated they would attend ongoing teacher professional development sessions.

Batukhan expressed concern that he needed some way of tracking the development of his school as a result of the training his teachers were receiving. He selected a moral climate survey known as CREE, developed by character education researchers in the United States, which was conducted three times during the fieldwork phase, at the end of October 2008, in March 2009, and in February 2010. The survey results were a significant basis for interviews with the director, who felt it gave him a greater awareness of the performance of teachers and students.

As the outside temperatures plummeted towards -20C on an afternoon in the middle of November 12 teachers, including their social worker, met for the first follow-up professional development session. The secondary school teachers had morning teaching timetables and the professional development sessions were directed towards them. They were intrigued and eager to learn, but quite puzzled as to how these ideas could be translated into the reality of their classroom experience. They requested demonstration lessons that integrated the Virtues Project strategies into secondary school subject lessons. Some teachers offered to have their subject lessons observed for analysis of the different ways the Virtues Project strategies could be integrated into typical lesson formats. Three lessons were observed by the end of November.
As ice was forming on the inside of the classroom windows in mid-December, the activities relating to teachers’ professional development in The Virtues Project heated up within the thick walls of the Russian-built school. A series of five demonstration student workshops for teachers and students, consisting of four weekly two-hour workshops and making 20 workshops in total, began and ran until the middle of January, when temperatures reached their lowest at around -40C. The workshops were titled Virtues in Numbers, Virtues in Action, Virtues in Dance, Virtues in Science, and Virtues in Self-Portraits. The majority of the workshops were held in one classroom, which belonged to Enkhturleg, a Virtues Connection team member, and were all held in the afternoon when the secondary school staff focused on their many and varied extracurricular activities. In total, seven Virtues Connection teachers—Ireedui, Bileg-Oyun, Enkhturleg, Bolordusal, Shijirtuya, Bolormelmii and Batsooj—were able to participate. One teacher, Ireedui, who was the youngest and newest teacher to the school, attended all the demonstration student workshops. The teachers assisted in the process of teaching up to 80 students to give virtues acknowledgements, conducted sharing circles, and then explored virtues through the various subject foci.

An interesting development occurred as a result. Enkhturleg’s grade six students used their homeroom as a base to store their belongings and wait between activities. Over one third of her students participated in the workshops; the rest remained in the classroom quietly working on their own activities as the workshops took place. The most popular workshop amongst the grade six students, particularly Enkhturleg’s homeroom students, was the Virtues in Action workshop in which students created YouTube video clips of cooperatively produced plays focusing on particular virtues. Most of Enkhturleg’s grade six students became familiar with
virtues language as a result and either participated or observed virtues being consciously practiced and recognized. For Enkhturleg, this had very beneficial results for her in her classroom atmosphere, and she particularly noted that her enthusiasm for teaching was returning.

The second Virtues Connection meeting was held in early February, just as the Mongolian population were focused on their traditional nomadic Tsagaan Sar, a lunar new year festival that marks the steady upward turn in winter temperatures. Teachers shared their growing enthusiasm for using virtues acknowledgments with others. In the last half of February, Enkhturleg, Bileg-Oyun, Ireedui, Bolordusal and Shijirtuya were available to be interviewed, and also Bat-Erdene, a young teacher who had not previously been involved in the Virtues Connection meetings or the demonstration student workshops. Interviews focused on their interpretations of the concepts of The Virtues Project and their responses to them, what they had observed in the students exposed to the Virtues Project-inspired activities initiated by teachers, and their opinion on the potential benefit, or not, as the case may be, of the Virtues Project activities for the school community. Also discussed in these interviews were the results of the moral climate survey carried out at the beginning of the school year, some four months previous. Director Batukhan and social worker Asralt were also interviewed, though the director's interview focused exclusively on the first results of the moral climate survey. The second survey did not happen for another month after this interview with him.
At the time the first Virtues Project workshop was carried out for the teachers there was no systematic approach to moral education in the school and no conscious collaborative attention given to it. Teachers believed they had to be forceful and strict to train children to be disciplined. Praise might be given when high achievement was reached, and this would often come in the form of awards that recognized top ranking as best student, best teacher, best class or best school. They applied their understanding of the curriculum, as entirely subject-bound, to their expectations of what moral education in a school might be like. There was space for its possible provision during a weekly lesson time known as “student time,” although this time was usually used for students to organize class tasks or catch up on various subject assignments.

The Virtues Project workshop introduced teachers to a radically different way of engaging with moral education to what they had experienced in the past. The teachers already knew, and were attracted to, the virtues on the list provided, but it was the virtues language strategy that gave them access to these virtues in ways they had not experienced before. In the first Virtues Connection meeting a month later, Bileg-Oyun shared, “when I heard virtues acknowledgements I felt cheerful… Those virtues are not unfamiliar to us” (November 2008). Enkhturleg told of how her focus on two particular virtues helped her to deal with her new homeroom class of young students:

This year I have taken sixth grade, it was difficult, because when they clean the class room always I had to watch them. But after the Virtues Project
training I understood myself, I put too much control and told them what they have to do. So I have chosen two virtues: thankfulness and trustworthiness. My students clean in groups of four. I acknowledge their virtues and practicing of thankfulness and trustworthiness. Now there is no need to check everything. I think I will use more virtues from the 52 virtues set.

(Enkhturleg, November 2008)

Moral development was being seen in a different light, not as the memorization of moral principles or as moral reasoning development, but as the development of expressing virtues in action. Shijirtuya, when referring to the virtues acknowledgements of students and those that she and her colleagues were making in the month since the training, reflected that, for her, “What I am mostly happy about is that the main key power of the class is in our hands” (November 2008).

Teacher Vulnerability

Teachers experience moral development in flourishing, decaying or in evolutionary terms, not unlike their students do. Tsogzolboo “was shocked” when she began teaching in the school, judging the atmosphere in the school to be “really unsatisfactory” (May 2009). Her sense of vulnerability was heightened because “the way people behave and talk seemed to be very hard to cope with” (May 2009). She protected herself by shutting down her enthusiasm for teaching, just as Enkhturleg had. Her “life in here was very passive” as she found it was better “to go with the flow as it felt much easier” in order to deal with the tensions (May 2009). The moral experience in the school for Tsogzolboo contributed to a sense of decay. The Virtues Project brought her new understandings about “how to create positive atmosphere in places” (May 2009). As well as enabling new understandings about how to nurture
the flourishing of students, The Virtues Project also became a cause for her own flourishing, decreasing the social vulnerability she felt in the school previously.

The virtues helped me because I was not aware of my virtues. I knew I was truthful but how about other virtues I needed? I simply did not know them. I think I also did not know what I needed. I needed cleanliness, oh no, self discipline. It has something to do with self-realization. (Tsogzolboo, May 2009)

Encountering the Good

The Virtues Project workshop activities introduced physical encounters with the “good”. The sharing circle involved teachers and students sitting in a circle, a radically different seating arrangement than the usual where, traditionally, students were seated in rows of desks facing a teacher by a blackboard. Participants could see all of the faces in the circle, looking into the eyes of each other, noting their smiles of recognition of moral beauty in the narrated actions of others, and exemplifying virtues as each virtues acknowledgement was shared. They first imagined the school represented by the flame of a candle. They then stated how they wished to see virtues manifested in the school. It became a physical encounter with the school as a community, as a repository of moral beauty. These introductions set the scene for centering virtues language in the locus of the school environment, enabling teachers to narrate the teaching-learning context in terms of virtues in action. Teaching opportunities became a potential physical encounter with the good.

Teachers had not thought of themselves in terms of the virtues they practiced in the way they lived their lives, related to their colleagues and taught their students, nor in terms of the virtues they identified themselves with. Bolormelmii revealed, “I
never thought before I have such brilliant virtues as a human being. I never think this much, never” (May 2009). Receiving virtues acknowledgements from others is having one’s own life narrated by another who puts forward their recognition of the good in one’s actions. The inner dialogue of the self with the self becomes transformed by such acknowledgments. Teachers found their self-perceptions changing and observed the growth of their self-confidence in the worthiness of their moral orientation.

I am very happy to hear the virtues I could not believe that I have in myself otherwise… It felt good to be respected by those who are older than me. I am also happy about some progress I made in myself as well as in the way I influence others. [I am so thankful for learning] this beautiful thing!

(Bolordusal, May 2009)

Enkhturleg began recognizing virtues in herself and others, and this encounter with the good caused her to reassess herself and to change her attitudes and actions towards her students. The contrapuntal voices of force and aggression as legitimate and necessary elements of teaching had been a cause of confusion of moral horizons for her. Her experience implementing the Virtues Project strategies precipitated an inner dialogue focusing on the reinterpretation of her approach as teacher. She began to fuse her moral horizons with that of The Virtues Project and continually related her inner conversations with others, as Bileg-Oyun observed:

Enkhturleg was telling herself, “I have been so rude with people. I used to teach previous graduates. While class was going on class teacher used to come inside and ask where the book is and scold them to do this and that. I can’t be so rude like that with children. While seeing that I used to feel bad inside about how badly she is behaving with a child… By getting involved in
this project I learnt how to behave with people and started understanding my class students and even students understood me. Even parents understood me and were appreciating about this project and were telling me, ‘How good a teacher you are!’ and even some of them were crying.” She talks about it all the time. (Bileg-Oyun, June 2009)

In the initial workshop, teachers had many opportunities to experience receiving virtues acknowledgements from others. Enkhturleg had never heard acknowledgements from others before. She particularly liked the sharing circle activities in which participants “revealed their personal experiences and life stories so that they could inspire my life” (February 2009). Virtues language opens up an important space in everyday life, that of moral beauty. Enkhturleg’s response of inspiration comes from an encounter with the moral beauty of virtues exemplified in the narration of familiar lives. Virtues language gave the teachers access to recognizing moral beauty in virtues terms in the actions of self and others. Feeling this inspiration motivated the young teachers to become involved in the systematic implementation of the virtues-based strategies of The Virtues Project.

Teachers were also similarly inspired by an example of virtues education integration in a mathematics lesson on counting methods and area calculation. An illustration of slaves ordered in an efficient sleeping arrangement in the hold of a sailing ship transporting them from Africa to America served as the amount to count in different ways and then to work out the area of the hold in which the slaves were held. Workshop participants found that, while they were making these calculations, their moral responses were centring their thoughts on compassion and justice. Bileg-Oyun was highly motivated by the experience of moral beauty in a simple mathematics exercise:
I could not help seeing the picture of those slaves on the ship in my eyes and felt compassionate for them. Therefore if we offer that kind of issue to the students their compassion will develop... I courageously promised to implement that in my class. (Bileg-Oyun, February 2009)

She and Ireedui became very involved in the Virtues in Numbers demonstration student workshop during January 2009, a “very different experience in the way it touched the hearts of others,” according to Ireedui (February 2009). The extension of virtues teachable moments into planned integration into subject lessons gave these teachers an understanding of how to facilitate experiences of moral beauty in the ordinary learning activities of their mathematics lessons. Bolormelmii became inspired by the workshop example to integrate virtues learning and language into the content of her English lessons. Enkhturleg began integrating virtues understandings into her science lessons. The research participant teachers were being drawn to the virtues as being morally beautiful and indicated the presence of a deeply loved and admired constitutive good that caused them to become inspired by evidence of its features in their lives.

Teachers as Flourishing Selves

Virtues acknowledgements taught teachers to tell the story in student engagements and highlight the moral beauty or truth inherent in the motivations of the student actors in this story. For example, Bolordusal relates this story:

This afternoon I was walking through the hallway and seventh grade students were shouting in the classroom. There was no teacher. One of the students was asking to borrow 100 tugrik because he wanted to buy something. Some of the students asked others for 10 tugrik for him, but
some of them didn’t care about it. Suddenly one student asked help from almost everybody. Then everyone recognized what was going on and everybody checked their pockets and contributed 10 and 20 tugrik. I was so impressed with them. They helped and showed consideration for each other by showing generosity. (November 2008)

The plot and actors were clear, and, in the responsive actions and words of the students, she discerned their intentions and motivations, which she expressed in virtues terms. When students helped one of their colleagues to raise a small amount of money to purchase something, Bolordusal saw it as a demonstration of consideration and generosity.

Giving attention to virtues in story, as done in virtues language, brought the meaning and value of virtues closer to the teacher storytellers. Hearing these stories from each other in the Virtues Connection meetings gave teachers the opportunity to develop greater understanding of virtues in practice. Virtues acknowledgements are stories of virtues in the everyday lives of known actors that create and build an awareness of virtues. Tsogzolboo found The Virtues Project had helped her become aware of her virtues. Teachers used virtues language to give narrative to the virtues they valued as intentions behind the many variations of actions and responses they observed in their own lives and in the lives of others around them. Embedded in the everyday contexts that virtues language was applied, practical reason, practical wisdom and reasonableness is discernable.

Virtues language expresses the interpretations of what is meaningful and worthy of admiration in how people live their everyday lives. In her research journal, Bileg-Oyun recorded some observations of students as reinterpretations in terms of virtues language.
[A grade 10 student] is showing his friendliness and helpfulness to his classmates through explaining their mathematics problems… [Five students] are showing their orderliness and tact through their task completion. [Grade 10] students, they need to develop their tolerance and respect of others by respecting others’ opinions… [Two grade 11] students showed their unity through giving smile cards to each other during the celebration day. [Two grade eight students] are showing their excellence through the solving mathematics problems faster. [One grade eight student] is showing her helpfulness through helping to her classmates for solving mathematics problems… Some of [grade eight] students need to mobilize their idealism without teachers demand. [Grade 10] students have shown their creativity, purposefulness and unity through participating in the lesson attentively. I’m grateful because this class environment and students’ participation is getting better. It makes me happy and enthusiastic. (Bileg-Oyun, March 2009)

In naming particular virtues she revealed what she considered to be good in the learning behaviour of students and recorded how she saw these values being interpreted into classroom life. For Bileg-Oyun, the friendly, helpful, orderly, tactful, tolerant, respectful, united, excellent, idealistic, creative and purposeful intentions in learning contributed to her sense of being as a teacher. Recognising these virtues as intentions expressed in the actions of her students gave her a feeling of happiness, a wholeness of self that caused her to become more enthusiastic and motivated as a teacher. It enhanced her sense of being as a teacher.

Ireedui understood the work of continual interpretation and reinterpretation in terms of virtues application in life, and in her teaching practice, in terms of “being happy” about practicing virtues “in the right place at the right time. For example I could not use them properly. That is why some of the higher graders tend to
undermine my kindness” (February 2009). Ireedui demonstrated that she was reinterpretating her way of showing kindness so that the students did not undermine her role as teacher. Tsogzolboo, later in May 2009, deduced that The Virtues Project was “a psychological or spiritual assistance” for “renewing her mindset”. As the teachers became more familiar with using virtues language they described a sense of becoming better people because they began to recognize the virtues they could love and admire in their own actions and in their responses to the teaching situation.

*Teachers Becoming Purposeful Actors*

Teachers did not experience The Virtues Project as a series of lessons teaching virtues information in a prescribed way. Instead they engaged in the recognition of virtues as intentions embedded in the living reality of moments in their own lives. Virtues language required teachers to observe the ways virtues were expressed in the active responses of students in everyday situations at school. As actors in the world themselves, specifically concerned about the motivations and outcomes of the present and future actions of children, the teachers wanted to experience actively implementing the Virtues Project strategies in their particular context as teachers. At their first Virtues Connection meeting in November 2008, the teachers requested that they experience the application of the Virtues Project strategies in the reality of classroom learning. Human beings are actors in the world and active engagement in new skills activates personal agency in new ways of being in the world.

Enkhturleg told how learning to implement The Virtues Project resulted in “finding herself” because of “the wonderful virtues inside of us, but we didn’t reveal those in life” before, awakening in her a new desire: “now I want to show my good virtues to people” (February 2010). This later reflection coincided with the
significant changes in her way of being as a teacher between her first lesson observed at the end of 2008 to the one observed in the beginning of 2009. She had become a calmer, more patient person with her students. Bileg-Oyun reflected that prior to the Virtues Project training “we blind our eyes on their virtues… I found out it feels much different when you look for good qualities of that person” (June 2009). She was the most encouraging and supportive member within the Virtues Connection team, and she brought everyone together to practice virtues acknowledgements during January 2009. Bolormelmeii remembered her own reaction:

> When we attend the workshop, get information, then we arouse, yeah? We like to share with many people, closest people like sisters, because this is the time for all of us nurturing our children. (Bolormelmeii, May 2009)

When one recognizes the virtues embedded in the intentions of one’s own actions, one is already acting. The interesting effect for the younger teachers in the Virtues Connection was the warmth created in relationships that inspired and motivated even more actions with virtuous purposes.

Teachers continued to enrich their own interpretations of their living reality, and those around them, as they gained more experience in using the virtues language. In both the small actions of the everyday and in the long-term goals of life, virtues increasingly became the way teachers understood and evaluated their own and others’ being and acting in the world. This came with a sense of renewal in attitude towards teaching, and a sense of flourishing as teachers, because of the new strategies they were implementing in their lives and in their classrooms.

> I had lost my enthusiasm to teach. But perhaps because of the virtues workshop or because I saw my virtues I got my enthusiasm back again… I learnt new virtues vocabulary. I started to think how I should treat certain
behaviour. The greatest benefit of the training is my fire for teaching.

(Enkhturleg, February 2009)

Renewing a major purpose in teaching—the moral development of children—was accompanied with a sense of personal moral identity within teachers. The focus on recognising virtues in the narrative of a lived life sustained self-interpretations and the alignment of self-identity with virtues intentions.

My own character, I have my own virtues, like respect and listening to others, even children, elders or young people. Naturally I have good virtues.

When I reflect on myself those virtues help me to have a peaceful life, having good friends and being surrounded by my family. I felt I need to shine and develop my virtues more. (Bolormelmii, May 2009)

The good we desire underpins our way of being and becoming. We can see this good evidenced in our living reality, which was illuminated for the teachers through their narration of the virtue, situated in the story of observed action in virtues language. They were drawn to the good, illuminated by the virtues acknowledgements they chose to interpret, because they loved and admired these virtues. During our lives we are exposed to a plurality of goods, not all of which we love and admire equally. Some will inspire us to act in new ways unfamiliar to us before. Asralt had previously emulated the inherited “good” of people management methods when she cut teachers’ salaries if, for example, their students arrived late to school. She was supported in this form of punishment by the director and by the education ministry who also accepted and promoted this as “good leadership”. After attending the Virtues Project training and professional development meetings, she stopped this approach and instead began “acknowledging others by the virtues language” (Enkhturleg, May 2009). She became friendly and approachable,
understanding and patient. She had felt the love for the moral beauty she perceived in the virtues that she, and others, recognized, and noted that others responded with positive behavioural changes in ways she was not able to achieve with the old management methods.

The good that commands our love and admiration, when it is encountered, becomes the motivation for transformation, for becoming, in both new moral understandings and changed ways of behaving. As a young teacher new to the school, Ireedui employed the “old method to keep students quiet in formal seating and expect them to do whatever the teacher asks. After the workshop I wished them to feel free to communicate with me more openly and they seemed to do so” (February 2009). She replaced the old approach with a strong focus on being kind in her interactions with students, and then discovered that some students would take advantage of her kindness. Her lessons became noisy and some students became unruly and disrespectful. She developed a new moral understanding that she should “not just being happy about the practice of beautiful virtues by others, but to know how to practice them in the right place at the right time” (February 2009). She strengthened her kindness in her way of explaining things to students with the use of virtues correction language to point out to students the moral work they needed to do in her classroom. Much later she shared, “I haven’t met any troubles so far to communicate with children. But still I need to practice using virtues language regularly” (Ireedui, April 2010). Transformation is often a gradual process of development towards the good, requiring us to increase our awareness and understanding of what the way of being which exemplifies the good might require us to be or become.
Our transformations reflect the moral horizon towards which we are moving. Ireedui’s reference to an “old method to keep students quiet” had other dimensions revealed by other teachers. Enkhturleg revealed she “used to try to keep students obedient. In other words I used to be edgy and forcefully aggressive” (February 2009). Tsogzolboo used “to mention what students could not do,” (May 2009) and “used to show abrupt face. I used to think teachers should be abrupt” (November 2009). Asralt “tended to criticize the person and argue what was right and wrong” (June 2009) and Bileg-Oyun “used to be very tough in order to be principled” (February 2009). The Virtues Project presented these teachers with a different way of being that involved recognizing the virtues practiced by self and others. They became flexible, forgiving of mistakes, understanding of students’ situations, patient and learned “how to make an angry person smile” (Bileg-Oyun, February 2010). Their goal to educate students to become good people and to progress academically had not changed. But some of their understanding had changed: namely, that human nature came to be seen as potentially good rather than inherently wild, and that human becoming was to be nurtured and not manipulated through force. They sought to fuse the existing moral horizon of Mongolian education with that of The Virtues Project.

**Becoming a Close Relational Web of Teachers**

The personal sense of flourishing and empowerment each teacher experienced came about in a relationally embedded encounter within a group as they engaged with The Virtues Project together. Teachers were engaged in professional dialogues together about the implementation and outcomes of The Virtues Project. The first experiences the teachers had with applying the virtues language strategy was with
each other, and they found this had a profound effect on their previously distant relationships.

The Narrative Context

As Mongolia was in the process of thawing out after the long and deep winter, the teachers were realizing that they were experiencing more than the rekindling of their idealism and enthusiasm for teaching. Strong collegial support was developing where there had been none before. The Virtues Connection team, now a core of about six teachers, was also developing strong friendships that transcended their professional commitments and began to exist outside of the school environment. Asralt also found a new way of relating to the teachers in her strengthening relationships with those in the Virtues Connection team. Comments and reflections about the closeness forming in teacher relationships gained momentum in the two Virtues Connection meetings held in February 2009 and in the interviews conducted that month. This phenomenon was described in Mongolian as *iluu oir dotno*, directly translated as “very close communication” at the time.

During March, the Virtues Connection teachers were focusing more intently on building up their virtues language fluency, which they did in their dealings with each other, in and out of meetings, and through their research journals. In their Virtues Connection meetings they reflected together on their experiences of using virtues language and how they felt about each other as a result.
The school grouped the teachers in two ways, as homeroom teachers of a particular grade area, and as teachers in a particular subject area. Yet the sense of isolation was strong for the younger teachers. The subject-bound, cognitively focused, curriculum divided subject teachers from other subject teachers. The grade grouping focus isolated younger grades from older grades. The classrooms divided teachers from each other as they imparted subject-bound concepts in a lecture style to a class of students sitting in rows of desks facing the blackboard and teacher.

The teachers had attended the two-day introductory workshop in October the previous year and had joined in with the professional development meetings that followed. Some had exposed their own teaching to an analysis that demonstrated possible applications of the Virtues Project strategies in their own lesson styles. Teachers joined in with the demonstration student workshops with students from mid-December to mid-January. By early February, these teachers were feeling close, not typical of their experience in the school up to that point. They had constantly been using the virtues language, particularly virtues acknowledgements, with each other. The experience of receiving virtues acknowledgements from others was transforming their sense of being, their sense of identity, as better selves and better teachers. This transformation was not occurring in selves who might be characterised as rational, atomistic, individual selves. Rather, relationally embedded selves were nurturing the transformation of each other through the vehicle of virtues language.
New Friendships

Language is created, shared and maintained by people together in community. Language also binds people together in a relationship of shared meaning. When the teachers began using virtues language with each other they were sharing their understandings of many different virtues in the way these manifested themselves as intentions in action. Each act that exemplified a particular virtue, or virtues, would be an interpretation of the way these virtues gave meaning to an action, to a particular behaviour, to particular responses to situations, and to other people. The virtues language, which gives focus to the virtue featured in a particular way of acting, a particular way of life, was experienced by the teachers as a way of sharing understandings about the virtues, about the way or ways of life that the group together found worthy and admirable. It created friendships where there had been none and bound a group of teachers together in a community that sought to consciously practice virtues in their life. “Before, we weren’t close friends,” said Enkhturleg. “After we have known our virtues, we became friends, and it makes us happy and it is part of our life” (Enkhturleg, November 2009). They learned from each other and sought to exemplify the way of being they admired in each other. “I really want to learn Shijirtuya’s peacefulness and Ireedui’s perseverance. I like those virtues… I did not think about learning from their virtues before,” declared Bolordusal (May 2009).

Teachers tested their interpretations of many virtues in ordinary conversations with each other, becoming close in friendship as they shared these interpretations through virtues acknowledgements, and sometimes virtues corrections. They became more familiar with the moral and spiritual landscape they were already immersed in
because they chose to talk about, and notice in each other’s ways of being and doing, those goods, in virtues terms, which they valued and admired.

We did not used to use virtues language with each other. Then, young teachers discussed with each other that how we should use the language acknowledgement and correction with each other, instead of using it only with students… We admit our mistakes easily when, for example, we suggest Ireedui how quickly she was telling her words when teaching and how she had to correct that. We have started observing each other’s lesson too. When we tell each other how enthusiastic we look and how much work it means to be fulfilled that way, it lifts our spirit up. (Bileg-Oyun, June 2009)

The dialogic relationships of these teachers, based on virtues language, became a small dialogic community—a web of interlocution, as Taylor would call it. Teachers found they were emotionally supported and fulfilled by their relational web. They flourished together as they shared the recognition and explanations of virtues in action. The inclusion of virtues reflections in their conversations contributed to a better understanding of their own self, and to the flourishing of their shared selves in the creation, fortification and restructuring of identity through virtues analysis. This way of being together created self-belief and confidence, and the strength of unity.

*Encountering Virtues Together*

Virtues language situates the speaker in the heart of a human engagement to notice another’s way of acting that has to do with valuing and respecting human life. Recognizing and articulating many virtues together in the conversations of a
An Exploration of The Virtues Project

relational web becomes a way of living together as people who flourish with the practice of virtues. The teachers demonstrated that they were better able to recognize the dignity of a person with virtues terms expressed in stories about that person’s way of being. The three axes of morality identified by Taylor—the notions of human dignity in a person’s way of being, the meaningfulness in living different ways of life, and respect for others in the many ways of acting in the world—were all enhanced for the teachers by their practice of virtues language.

Experiencing the development of morality, in the broader conception Taylor puts forward, enhanced relationships. The strong evaluations of choosing which virtues to acknowledge in the actions of others also transformed the valuing of people themselves. The teachers saw other teachers differently, learning to “study the characters and virtues behind these moods [of ‘sanguine and choleric’ teachers],” as Shijirtuya explained it, instead of “making our own judgment about others, but in fact [seeing] there are many more virtues in them” (February 2009). For Shijirtuya, seeing these virtues in others, in their way of being, living and acting, meant she could “cope with them” (February 2009) and even become friends with them.

The strong evaluations, continually being made by teachers as they thought about what virtues to acknowledge, guide and correct in others, became powerful features in their own moral frameworks, their own moral horizons. The transition of focus towards virtues being, or needing to be, practiced was highly visible to the teachers in the responses of the social worker. Asralt attests that, prior to being introduced to The Virtues Project, she “tended to criticize the person” (June 2009). Tsogzolboo interpreted this behaviour as a moral framework that “put rules higher than people,” thus making Asralt appear to her as a cold and negative person (May 2009). Asralt reflects that she came to realize “that in this society with lots of
frustration, we should be compassionate about others and share our knowledge with them” (June 2009). Enkhturleg noticed this changed perception in Asralt: “since the training she has been saying and suggesting positive things. She has stopped cutting my salary” (February 2009). In November 2008, Asralt was openly giving virtues acknowledgements in teacher meetings, something she continued to do, and by June 2009 she was very clear in her belief that “teachers need to treat each person from their heart,” because of the success she was having in bringing out the best in the teachers under her care as social worker. By February 2010, Asralt acknowledged that she saw conflict in a new way:

I try to create an environment among teachers as well as students that everyone should participate actively and be creative. Here, too, I try my best to participate. The most important understanding is that people have conflicts because of disrespect of each other or some virtue risk. So we need to prevent communication conflicts. This is very important: to open yourself, to believe in yourself. (Asralt, February 2010)

The good was encountered in relationship as teachers implemented the new strategies they had learned. When Asralt gave virtues acknowledgements to several teachers, she was using nurturing and integrative power in her relationships with them and not the oppressive approach she had used before. As relationally embedded beings, the teachers responded positively to this new flow of power from Asralt. Bileg-Oyun shared that when she received virtues acknowledgements from Asralt after her first open lesson demonstrating the integration of virtues into her mathematics teaching, she felt inspired and encouraged (March 2009). After 18 months of implementation experience with The Virtues Project in her school, Enkhturleg came to recognize the relational nature of moral education:
But virtues are not single person’s work. It is group work. (Enkhturleg, April 2010)

*Acting Together*

The Virtues Connection teachers followed the purpose of implementing the Virtues Project strategies in their school because through it they experienced their own being and becoming as teachers and moral selves. This was the greater purpose initiated by the director and social worker. Another purpose within this greater purpose, but no less important, was one created by the teachers themselves, which Enkhturleg described briefly as, “after the training we were agreeing with each other to use the virtues language,” (February 2009). This was the first joint purpose they created and worked on. Through this focus, the teachers learned to constantly evaluate their actions in the past and present and had cause to carefully consider their intended actions in terms of virtues practice. Their conception of being and becoming was as a person flourishing, or not, in the application of virtues in their lives and the prominence of virtues in their moral horizons.

The teachers practiced their new skills on each other and in sharing their techniques prepared to give virtues acknowledgements to students, such as Bileg-Oyun outlined in her journal entries. The new skills activated their personal agency as teachers of moral education and also the new way of being such a teacher. The warmth created between them inspired them and motivated them to expand the implementation of the Virtues Project strategies.
Teachers Becoming a Morally Nurturing Web With and For Students

Unsure about how to apply the Virtues Project strategies in the classroom, the teachers requested the opportunity to observe how the strategies could be integrated into their subject lessons. Their observation was structured in the form of participation, where teachers and trainer engaged in workshops and trial teaching activities. The teachers found that, as they progressively implemented the strategies in their classrooms, teacher-student relationships began to transform. Teachers then shared stories of morally nurturing experiences with, and for, students. Moral education then jumped from lessons into relationships.

The Narrative Context

Enkhturleg’s experience with her homeroom students as a result of the demonstration student workshops not only created a renewed love for teaching within her, it also created close relationships, oir dotno, between her students and between her students and her. Her grade six students began insisting that she use virtues acknowledgements for their fellow students who had practiced particular virtues well. In the first Virtues Connection meeting of February 2009, Enkhturleg commented on the warm atmosphere growing within her homeroom class and that her students were responding positively to her initiatives arising out of applying some of the Virtues Project strategies. In this meeting, the teachers received a handout with the analysis of the three lessons they had observed in late November. The multiple ways the different strategies could be integrated into the lessons were listed as transcript insert suggestions, and, though not all of them could be
implemented in one lesson, it was clear to teachers that there were multiple opportunities to seamlessly knit the Virtues Project approaches into their existing lesson structures.

Encouraged, teachers began to experiment with integrating their own interpretations of the Virtues Project strategies into their subject lessons. In mid-February of 2009, three of the Virtues Connection teachers were ready to have their lessons observed. Bileg-Oyun, a mathematics teacher, was the first to have her attempts to integrate virtues learning into her subject lesson observed. Ireedui, who had attended every demonstration student workshop, also offered her lesson to be observed, as she was seeking advice on how she could personally integrate the strategies. Enkhturleg wanted her new relationship with her homeroom students, transformed as a result of the use of virtues acknowledgment since the demonstration student workshops experience, to be recorded for analysis.

From the beginning of March, the enthusiasm of the Virtues Connection team inspired weekly team meetings, the majority of which were held without the presence of the trainer, during which they also reflected on their journal entries of ideas about how to apply virtues language to the moral development of students in their lessons. Their increased confidence motivated them to consider a collaborative teaching event to implement certain features of the Gifts of Character course, and the demonstration student workshops, into student lessons. Asralt was very supportive of this initiative, joining with them as one of the teachers. As the social worker, she had ultimate responsibility for the Tuesday morning “student time” lesson, and she offered this time to her colleagues as an opportunity to hold the event.
The early March 2009 team meetings gave considerable time to planning a “virtues lesson” for students of homeroom teachers in grades six to eight who were willing to participate in the event. The lesson was planned in three parts:

- **Beginning:** an overview of the lesson, the introduction of the 52 virtues, and a demonstration on how to give virtues acknowledgments.
- **Middle:** students forming small groups for a sharing circle activity in which each student would read a selected virtues card contributing their thoughts on this virtue, and each other student would give them a virtues acknowledgement.
- **End:** whole class discussion on how the experience of the sharing circle and the giving and receiving of virtues acknowledgements made them feel.

Enkhturleg offered to trial the virtues lesson with her homeroom students on 10 March and then ran the lesson again three days later for the Virtues Connection teachers to observe. They decided to give these grade six students leadership roles in the student sharing circle groups in the other homerooms. Asralt, Ireedui, Bileg-Oyun, Bolormelmii and Enkhturleg, assigned a student to work with them as group leaders in the virtues lesson with the five other homeroom groups. Enkhturleg had her students prepare “virtues tree” posters, which they modelled on the commercially made poster available from the Virtues Project website. These were then used in the special virtues lesson event scheduled for 17 March in the five homeroom classes. Bileg-Oyun created “smile notes,” based on an idea in the Virtues Project *Educator’s Guide*, on which could be written virtues acknowledgements, and which teachers gave to students in their virtues lesson. Not all the homeroom teachers stayed in the classroom during the virtues lesson shared with their students. Those that did
observed with interest and asked questions about the structure and methods in the lesson.

The grade six student leaders met with the five virtues lesson teachers in the afternoon of the same day and reflected on their virtues lesson experience. The teachers then held a Virtues Connection team meeting with Asralt and reflected on the events of that day. They held one more Virtues Connection meeting on 24 March with others to share their experiences and reflections. The second moral climate survey was conducted on the same day.

The Ontological Interpretation of Teacher Narratives on “Becoming a Morally Nurturing Web with and for Students”

Moral education is not generally taught in Mongolian schools. There is no set curriculum or requirement for schools to teach it. When programs are introduced, they fit within the timetable as a subject taught in weekly blocks by a specialist teacher. Many teachers in Mongolia typically conceive of moral education as a curriculum subject about “right behaviour”. Like most other schools in Mongolia, there was no systematic focus given to moral education in this school. However, while there was no systematic approach to moral education, it existed as an unexamined hidden curriculum in the way school community members related to each other. The assumption about human nature was that the child, and even the adult, needed external discipline in order to learn, and that such discipline needed to come from a higher authority in the hierarchical arrangement of the school and education ministry. The good was understood to be academic excellence, and such achievement meant the person would become a citizen who worked enthusiastically
for the good of the state. Teachers were most familiar with disciplinary methods that were strict and severe in order to achieve this good in education.

The Virtues Connection team discovered that the flow of power in the teacher-student relationship could be changed. When recognizing the virtues intentions in student action and expressing this in virtues language terms, teachers noticed the awakening of internal discipline and motivation within the students. Empowering students to seek to become good, without the need for coercive force, was empowering for the teachers themselves. They reassessed their old understanding of human nature to view the child as having the potential for virtues practice already within. Moral education was being experienced as a way of being together in conversations that articulated the good in everyday teacher-student engagements.

* Becoming a Web of Teaching and Learning Interlocutors

Teaching students the language of the virtues brought teachers into conversations about virtues with their students. Bileg-Oyun’s dialogue with students during the March virtues lessons event turned at one point to the meaning of “love” as a virtue. A group of boys were too embarrassed to discuss this virtue, so she asked, “Do you feel love all the time? When do you express it?”, and “When do we feel it?” To which “they happily said, ‘When we smile.’” A girl gave another example: “When I leave home in the morning my mother kissed me” (March 2009). The boys had a small dialogical friendship web that only focused on romantic love, which they felt embarrassed about bringing into the greater dialogical web of teacher and class. Cultural meanings of the virtues were conveyed in virtues language shared with students in other ways than direct discussions. Tsogzolboo found two students quarrelling while coming into class one day. She corrected them by recommending
“they could have solved the problem by using patient virtues” (November 2009). In this example, patience and associated virtues are given new meaning for the students because they became exposed to a new understanding of their application, either as a way of being when at school, or a strategy for changing the relationship between each other.

Teachers who consistently brought virtues acknowledgements into the dialogical relationship with students over the course of the research period found students responded by looking “for virtues acknowledgements from their teachers—we can see that from their eyes” (Bolormelmii, February 2010). Teachers found it easy to work with students who became familiar with hearing and using virtues acknowledgements. “About the students, I would like to mention 6.1. Looks like I have connected with them more through virtues. I recognize them using the virtues language,” stated Bileg-Oyun (June 2009). The understanding of virtues and how to practice them together enriched the way of relating with each other for both those students and the teachers who immersed themselves in virtues language. For those students who were as yet unfamiliar, Enkhturleg noted, “We have to talk with the virtues language for long enough to just tickle their understanding” (February 2010). Students require immersion in virtues language with the teachers they come into contact with often.

For Enkhturleg and her homeroom students, the experience of participating in ongoing professional development and demonstration student workshops, and the opportunity to work together in teaching others the skills of virtues language, made possible a richer and more complex shared understanding of the virtues as intentions in their interactions with each other. The many ways they recognized virtues in different situations, and then saw them enacted in diverse ways by each other, came
to form the tacit background of how they saw the moral landscape of the homeroom relational web. The class identity as being “peaceful” was becoming established, according to Enkhturleg, who even had teachers not in the Virtues Connection team “wonder how peaceful my class is” (February 2009). Bileg-Oyun said, “I treat them a bit differently than other classes. They look more advanced than other sixth graders” (February 2009). The atmosphere amongst these students was generated by the mentioning of virtues in many different ways—as acknowledgments and corrections, as purposes in their own personal development, and to temper the words they used and the things they talked about with each other.

Our class children use the virtues language most of the time. Sometimes they remind me to use it by asking, “Teacher! With which virtue shall we acknowledge [student name]?” and so on. I also noticed the change in their speech. They control their language. Even this wallpaper is compiled with the virtues. Today I asked the girls during the girls meeting about their growth virtues. They used virtues language including helpfulness, and friendliness so on. I also notice them using the virtues names every day. (Enkhturleg, February 2009)

Using the virtues language strategy from The Virtues Project switched moral education from being in the form of a lesson imparting moral concepts to a dialogic journey in a moral space of questions about “who it is good to be,” “what it is good to do,” and “how it is good to live with others”.

Nurturing Encounters With the Good for Students

Students encountered the good in dialogical relationships with each other and with their teachers, both as listeners to virtues language directed to them and as
speakers directing it to others. Each was free to choose to notice whichever virtues they pleased. The students liked to see the list of virtues on the wall because it reminded them of virtues they could recognize in each other. Enkhturleg observed a difference in the students in her class who had participated in the demonstration student workshops and had received a pack of the virtues cards for their own use. She noticed “those who participated looked more informed, and others seem to realize that those who participated in the workshops really learned something. When I noted those children knew all of the 52 virtues and had their own cards, they agreed with me confidently” (Enkhturleg, February 2009). Ireedui related a story of one of her students whom she had acknowledged for the organizational skills the student showed in leading fellow classmates “in the right way” and whom she later noticed “trying to be trustworthy and asking her classmates to be disciplined” (February 2009).

The familiarity with virtues and their frequent use in conversational exchanges enabled the students and teachers to be storytellers expressing their standpoint in the space of the virtues stories they told when giving virtues acknowledgments. They were able to take a perspective and find others agreeing with that perspective, or putting forward a different perspective, all set in the context of familiar life and with each other as familiar characters. Virtues language is described in The Virtues Project much as the grammar of a language is described. Yet once the new language is familiar and fluency is gained, virtues language is not a stilted prescription of how to make an acknowledgement, guide or correction. The plasticity of language makes it possible to express the recognition of virtues in the plots, and with the characters, of everyday moral engagement stories in creative and attentive ways. The interpretations and intentions of a person not only become evident, they also
transform because they are looking for the good in each other. This strategy caused the moral flourishing of individual teachers and students, and the community of their class group. Bileg-Oyun, one of the mathematics teachers who had participated in the Virtues in Numbers student workshops, and who was the first to offer her lesson with virtues integration activities to be videoed, commented that

the benefit of speaking virtues language comes from people’s virtues interaction through which they discover virtues from each other, reflect upon it, and furthermore take life inspiration and energy from these words.

(Virtues Connection, 10 March 2009)

The enhanced encounters with the good in friendly relationships through the dialogical exchange of virtues language was at the same time accompanied by encounters with the good in a spiritual dimension, where teachers and students could feel inspiration, peacefulness and joy. The moral beauty of virtues recognized in student behaviour moved teachers to give even more effort in their moral response. Bileg-Oyun’s journal entry about her open lesson in February 2009 states,

[student] has said his opinion freely and showed his excellence. [Student] solved mathematics problem faster and correct and showed his agility and excellence to others. I saw [student]’s self-confidence when he is giving virtues acknowledgement to [student]. All 6.1 students were enthusiastic and confident and attended actively in their lesson. It gives me inspiration. Also I showed my tact, reliability and unity through my teaching to 6.1. (Bileg-Oyun, February 2009)

Older teachers questioned Enkhturleg on her methods for keeping even the challenging grade eight and nine students cooperative and focused in class. She directed their attention to the virtues poster that represented her use of the virtues
language strategy from The Virtues Project. Even those teachers, who continued to believe in the need for, and to trust, forceful methods to subdue challenging classes in order to focus their attention on lesson content, recognized the moral beauty the virtues represent for all of them, calling them “spirit and spiritual,” according to Enkhturleg (February 2009).

*Becoming Moral Nurturers of Student Transformation*

Nurturing morality in students in terms of the dignity of being, a meaningful life and respectful engagement with others required from the teachers a change in teaching identity. They transitioned from being a fearsome force disciplining students to becoming moral nurturers for developing human beings who are learning to connect in empowering relationships as they prepare for lives of purpose that have meaning for both them and others. Enkhturleg felt her own transition into becoming a moral nurturer soon after the initial training saying, “I became more tactful, noticed their virtues and started to think how to develop them” (February 2009). A few months after the virtues lessons event, Shijirtuya observed, “our children are mainly choosing teachers they can trust, who speak virtues language, who have understanding. Teachers Bileg-Oyun and Ireedui, they are chosen by them” (May 2009). As moral nurturers, teachers identify with the relational web of integrative power that has evolved, becoming “we” when thinking about teaching:

*Now we know the kind of virtues we have. Now we can take purposefulness and can use it for our lives, yeah. Or by the virtue of patience we can communicate with students… We know purposefulness, that’s why we working according to that.* (Ireedui, May 2009)
As moral nurturers, the teachers were not only drawing on the tools of virtues language and the other Virtues Project strategies. Embedded in the choice of virtues, and the ways they acknowledged the practice of them, were moral principles that guided their sense of self-worth. Living a “peaceful and kind life,” as Tsogzolboo described it (May 2009), was an overriding standard all teachers wanted their students to achieve. The forceful approach many had used prior to learning the new approach from The Virtues Project had the same aim, although those entrenched in the old approach had to become progressively more and more forceful in order to maintain discipline. Rather than fostering conversations of persuasive reason around such standards, the use of coercion and force ended conversations and severely limited the flourishing of student and teacher-student relationships in the process. Virtues language opened up what Margaret Urban Walker describes as an expressive-collaborative space (Walker, 1993, pp. 36-37; 2007, pp. 67-69). Enkhturleg explains how she interpreted the energy required for both approaches and the results as she witnessed it:

In a previous time we, our education purpose is service, yeah, so, we teach and educate the children. This work had lots of pressure. With that pressure pushed that massive energy. Now, by virtues thing, doing the same, but instead of putting pressure on children just move them by virtues in easy way, and explain things in appropriate understandable way, yeah. Present and previous ones are different, yeah? Before, for example, we [were directed] from the top. School director gives tasks to teachers, that task passed by teachers to the children same way, same energy. Thus there was nothing to develop people. (Enkhturleg, May 2009)

Respect for one’s elders was also a motivating moral principle in the school. The older teachers demanded respect from both their students and the younger
teachers, and the younger teachers inspired respect when they verbalized their recognition of virtues in everyday engagements with students. As Tsogzolboo explained it, “so instead of agreeing with their low self-esteem, one should make them believe that they have potential” (May 2009), and Bolordusal observed, “now students get encouraged for the recognition of their enthusiasm and joy and try to engage in their tasks” (May 2009).

Student Transformations

As the year progressed, Enkhturleg’s role as moral nurturer of her homeroom class consolidated. She continued on with their virtues language immersion and the gradual introduction of the other strategies. The evidence of flourishing came to be recognized by more than their homeroom teacher and the other Virtues Connection teachers. Her class was officially noted for their exemplary performance after a year of immersion in virtues language and its associated strategies. Asralt reported that the class was chosen as the leading class in the school. There were set criteria the school management team followed for this award. Academic achievements were a priority, and Enkhturleg’s homeroom students had excelled in this. They participated in more creative activities in the school than other classes. Their class atmosphere was always friendly and united, a reliable class for the director to bring special visitors to the school into (Virtues Connection, March 2009). Parents involved themselves in class events with the students and teachers. The class’s own evaluations, on performance of set duties within the class and general friendliness between each other, had higher results than other classes, and even a school-wide survey of teachers and students recognized the more positive atmosphere in this class (Asralt, February 2010).
The flourishing of this particular class, which served as the hub of Virtues Project implementation, was not due to rational engagement with the voice of reason. Rather, it was immersed in a relational engagement that was respectful, compassionate, caring and loving. It had developed an expressive-collaborative space of shared voice, shared dialogue, shared stories of virtues in the everyday way of being, way of life and way of engaging with others. The transformation of the class and its teacher was one the school desired for all its students and teachers, and it arose out of the sincerity and authenticity of moral engagement.

Virtues language is the most powerful part in Virtues Project for bringing up children. Once the heart is involved it becomes pure—it is with virtues language. (Tsogzolboo, May 2009)

**Becoming a Morally Nurturing School Community**

The close teacher relationships and the morally nurturing engagements between teachers and students empowered the teachers to become more pro-active in contributing to the transformation of their school environment. Supported by an empowered and encouraging school leadership, the teachers extended their own professional capacities to endeavour to morally nurture the whole school community.

**The Narrative Context**

During February, Asralt noted that staff were becoming more caring and receptive towards each other from her social worker perspective. She began to focus more consciously on encouraging the growth of this warmer atmosphere in the school and supported those teacher initiatives inspired by The Virtues Project across
the school. The Virtues Connection teachers were also spreading their application of virtues acknowledgements to other staff in the school with the express purpose to improve their relationships with the older teachers. Director Batukhan was also observing the developments of the teachers and their activities. He began visiting the Virtues Connection team meetings with prominent visitors to the school to show off the “new project” happening in the school. Enkhturleg’s classroom was very accessible to the entrance lobby of the school and not far from the director’s office. She experienced numerous visits to her class by the director and his visitors to show them the 52 virtues being studied in the school. Teachers outside of the Virtues Connection team were commenting on the reliability of Enkhturleg’s grade six class to be consistently calm and focused on their work. A second of the two-day Gifts of Character workshops was held during the two-week school semester break at the end of March and beginning of April 2009. This was held to assist the 10 staff who wanted to complete the two-day course. The course was opened up, with the permission of the director, to teachers from outside the school who had begun hearing about The Virtues Project and had expressed interest in attending. Several attended.

Immediately thereafter, from 30 March to 1 April, a three-day Virtues Project Facilitator Training workshop was conducted in the school. Asralt, Enkhturleg, Bilge-Oyun, Ireedui, Bolormelmii, Bolordusal and Shijirtuya—the Virtues Connection team—attended, along with three other teachers from the secondary and primary sections of the school. A further six teachers from other schools, who had attended the two-day course held just prior, also attended. The participants were given opportunities to prepare and present on the different Virtues Project strategies and were involved in creating and conducting numerous activities suggested by The
An Exploration of The Virtues Project

Virtues Project for the facilitator training workshops. Also included in this workshop was the creation of a 90-day development plan, which teachers created for their schools. Each took on responsibilities for various aspects of the plans they had made. The director and social worker appointed Bolormelmii as the Virtues Project coordinator to arrange Virtues Connection meetings and ensure that teachers were adequately supported and monitored with the implementation of this plan.

Some of the homeroom teachers who had not attended the multiple virtues lessons on 17 February requested a second round of extracurricular student workshops for students who did not attend the first demonstration student workshops, and to have them in their classrooms. The focus of these workshops during the month of April was on Virtues in Action, which had proved to be the most popular event for all students. These teachers did not stay for the workshops.

In mid-May, another round of interviews was conducted to explore more deeply the teachers’ understandings and values concerning the purpose of education, the role of moral education, their personal goals at school, the school atmosphere, the nature of communication within the school community, their moral choice-making preferences, their moral exemplars, their ideal world vision, the nature of moral life in their home, and what they considered to be the defining aspects of the character of young people today. All seven Virtues Connection team members and Asralt took part in these interviews. The director preferred to be interviewed regarding the second moral climate survey. His schedule was very full and the interview did not happen until July.

The Virtues Connection team began conducting professional development meetings for the other interested teachers in the school, each of which focused on one or other of the strategies of The Virtues Project. In the beginning of the new school
year in September 2009, Asralt implemented a school-wide application of a 20 minute virtues lesson during the Tuesday morning student lesson. She scheduled two virtues each week and offered the assistance of the Virtues Connection teachers to plan these lessons, which she would check in the same manner as all teacher planning was checked.

*The Ontological Interpretation of Teacher Narratives on “Becoming a Morally Nurturing School Community”*

The gathering momentum of practicing a new way of achieving the good for students and for teachers galvanized the Virtues Connection team. Practicing the Virtues Project strategies drew attention to beliefs and values often occluded in the milieu of present day Mongolia. The new ideas about human nature, human engagement and the meaningfulness of life generated flourishing experiences for the younger teachers and their students. The spiritually energizing encounters with the good they already loved but had been separated from in prevailing ways of being in the school environment led to a fusion of the features of past and new moral horizons. They established new understandings in their moral horizons and articulated an expanded understanding of the purpose of education. Yet they faced a crucial vulnerability from the prevailing attitudes in the school generated by an entrenched understanding of how to train children and young adults. The young teachers chose to face this challenge with the same “communication skills,” as virtues language was sometimes called, that activated their own transformation. They had encountered the beauty of the good in virtues language and had recognized this good in each other as virtues motivating integrative engagement. They had facilitated the encounter with the good for their students and experienced nurturative power as
nurturers of the good in students. They now felt ready to tackle the challenge of transforming the entrenched reliance on exploitative and manipulative engagements they observed in the methods of the older teachers.

*Identifying the Vulnerability in the School Community*

The use of force and aggression as a method for ensuring the academic development of students is an expression of power identified with force, which Rollo May calls exploitative power (R. May, 1972, p. 99). The younger teachers had admitted their own edginess, abruptness and tough attitude towards students, with some using abusive language and sometimes even physical punishment such as pinching, slapping and hitting. Though they had discontinued the use of these methods of coercion to focus students on lesson activities, other teachers, who had not involved themselves in implementing the strategies of The Virtues Project, still employed these methods. “Some teachers keep their distance from the students in terms of communicating,” said Ireedui, adding that in the past “most teachers used criticizing language when they spoke to students, making them upset and discouraged” (May 2009). Batukhan’s review of the moral climate survey conducted in October 2008 described the essential education relationship as “not enough care and mutual understanding between teachers and students” (February 2009). The distance in the teacher-student relationship means a loss of communication and trust. The impoverished nature of such relationships increases opportunities for harm to those most vulnerable. The human reality of vulnerability raises ethical issues in human engagement to do with protection from such harms.

The younger teachers were witnessing improvements in their relationships with students as they implemented more of the Virtues Project strategies, but their
colleagues were still routinely engaged with students in forceful and aggressive ways. Inconsistent immersion of students in engagement with teachers exercising nutritive power halted progress in successfully establishing empowering relationships in the school. Bolormelmii noted her own experience of forgetting “to use and say virtues acknowledgement, then our previous efforts are useless” (February 2010).

The older teachers also exploited their position of power in their engagements with younger teachers in the school. Asralt explained that older teachers expected respect and exact obedience, and would lose their temper and verbally harass not only students but younger teachers as well (February 2010). The youngest teacher, and most recently employed in the school, was Ireedui, and she was rendered powerless to share her ideas with them.

Don’t know what to do, how to communicate with older people. I just pass them and say hello, never communicate so closely, even don’t say at least one sentence. It is strange… we have distance between us even though we are one colleague, for example in the situation of using each other’s classroom we need to talk about their class students but still they are very coldish. Young teachers also can’t express their opinion. (Ireedui, March 2009)

The disabling moments the younger teachers experienced in the school also came from those in the management team. Tsogzolboo expressed her disapproval of the flow of manipulative power to and from those in high positions who “liked to be surrounded with those who support their interests and bribe them” claiming those who suggested new changes were suppressed (May 2009). The strength of this kind of power was still evident to her eight months later when she claimed that “the longer
they teach they become more bully, always saying, ‘ME, ME!’ and not respecting others” (February 2010). Bolordsal perceived some progress because she saw “everyone became closer to each other. Before they did not speak at all. So they became closer” (February 2010). Issues of morality, sincerity and authenticity in the interactions between people are focused on protection from harm. The occlusion of values and beliefs to do with moral engagement in the school community had opened up the development of negative forms of power that students and younger teachers experienced as disempowering.

Re-Interpreting a Moral Horizon for Moral Nurturing

“The doing of moral education” according to Ireedui after she became a Virtues Project facilitator, “is being respectful towards each other, not too open, also respecting individual space, caring for others and spreading love to others” (May 2009). She identified life goods important for her in the doing of moral education after her experience of implementing the Virtues Project strategies. The Virtues Project, she observed, “directed people to positive virtues… when acknowledged for their virtues they are encouraged a lot then apply them in the best way to their life” (May 2009). Asralt highly valued this kind of nurturing environment because she believed “schools need to be a place where children like to come and lessons need to be favoured by them too” (June 2009). She encouraged her Virtues Connection team, trained right alongside them, and was instrumental in creating and sustaining initiatives, using integrative power with other educators to create a nurturing environment for students.

The teachers involved in the implementation of new strategies to establish a moral education approach in the school redefined the purpose of education. The
overriding goal in education of academic development was variously described as “educating a knowledgeable person,” “developing intellectual citizens,” “teaching theory to students,” and enabling students to be “qualified to find food by their education” (Ireedui, May 2009; Bolormelmii, May 2009; February 2010; Bileg-Oyun, June 2009). To this they recognized another equally important goal for education which they described as “virtues education for a well-formed individual,” “becoming completed inside, like perfect person,” “to educate a person as a real person,” and “developing moral citizens” (Ireedui, May 2009; Bolormelmii, May 2009; Bileg-Oyun, June 2009). Bolormelmii described her reinterpretation of moral nurturing as “I now focus more on reaching out to the students’ inner worlds” (February 2010). The virtues focus that opened up the moral space in the relationships between these teachers enabled them to construct richer moral frameworks in education.

*Extending the Morally Nurturing Relational Web*

Speaking virtues language was the most important practice adopted from The Virtues Project that brought the Virtues Connection teachers and particularly grade 6.1 together into a morally nurturing relational web. Tsogzolboo saw the importance of “acknowledging children with virtues language” for causing students to “change and become happy” (November 2009). Bileg-Oyun called virtues language “the right positive vocabulary” for “communication” with students making them “much easier to teach” (February 2010). As Ireedui became more fluent in her use of all the aspects of virtues language she noticed students becoming “more confident, more courageous, more enthusiastic” (February 2010). She also noted that by using the virtues language, particularly virtues acknowledgements, the “communication and
relationship with teachers became very much more positive, open and healthy” (February 2010). The director, “who used to be so tough on us, no appreciation, no encouragement, there was only negligence,” had also changed his way of relating because “now, based on virtues, our efforts are acknowledged and recognized” (Ireedui, February 2010). Asralt was always concerned for the rights of the child, to have respect for the inherent dignity they possessed as human beings. She also came to appreciate the rights of the teacher in the same way, interpreting the virtues language as an essential way of engaging with people to lessen the “virtues risk” that might expose their vulnerability to conflict.

The most important is that because people have conflicts because of disrespect of each other or some virtue risk; so have to prevent communication conflicts. This is very important: to open yourself, to believe in yourself. (Asralt, February 2010)

A new social practice was being established in the school with strong adherents whose encounters with moral beauty, both in themselves and in others, was the intrinsic motivation to give greater efforts to furthering the spread of this new way of engaging with others. The flourishing of both students and teachers was a clear benefit for them.

For the 20 minute Tuesday morning virtues lessons Asralt had established in September 2009, she assigned Virtues Connection teachers to various classes to assist. To meet this requirement she assigned Virtues Connection teachers to various classes to assist. Many teachers only required assistance with developing the lesson, and some requested further training in the Virtues Project strategies for themselves. A few demanded the Virtues Project teachers conduct this class each Tuesday and would then take this time off for other things. Asralt encouraged the Virtues
Connection teachers to continue persevering with the latter. The difficult interactions with the reluctant teachers, those who were older and entrenched in the exploitative power hierarchy, were met with a strongly positive attitude from the younger teachers. “The more we care for our communication and change ourselves, the more it will become easier for us to socialize,” Bileg-Oyun concluded. “A positive atmosphere is being created in the way that we took steps toward close interaction with those we don’t usually interact” (Bileg-Oyun, June 2009). Asralt was happy to note that “self-defensive behaviours and quarrels are lessened” (June 2009). Ireedui saw that the progress brought by virtues language was situated within the relationships in the school, “between the teacher and students, teacher to teacher, children to children” (May 2009). Bileg-Oyun’s experience with the extracurricular Smile Club that Asralt had encouraged her to create, and which three organizations outside the school supported, involved students already very experienced with the use of virtues language. She coached these students in creating relationships with “shy students” in the school, working with them to recognize their virtues and to reflect on their successes and challenges as they engaged with these isolated students. The Smile Club had a direct impact on the dialogical interaction between students and the flourishing of shy students in the school. Many students respected Bileg-Oyun for the leading role she played in this activity, which was still running after the close of the fieldwork phase.

Students whom I don’t teach even respect me. It was the project to socialize shy students into the mainstream student community. I received a lot of energy from this project. At the same time, I think I socialized shy students and engaged them into the mainstream student community. (Bileg-Oyun, February 2010)
Dialogical interaction infused with virtues language also enriched the relationships between the new Virtues Project facilitators and many other teachers in training workshops on the Virtues Project strategies. Bileg-Oyun said that even “co-organizing the training” brought more learning for her as well as “more positive relationships with many teachers” (February 2010).

The influence of the new way of doing moral education in the school finally affected the majority of the teachers during the Teachers Day celebration organized by the Virtues Connection teachers in early February 2010. They conducted a survey of teachers and students to identify those teachers best exemplifying various virtues. When the Virtues Connection teachers discovered that they held six of the top ten rankings, they removed themselves from the results. They prepared beautiful acknowledgement cards, which they presented during a school sponsored teachers dinner in a restaurant. Some commented it was almost like receiving an Oscar award. Everyone agreed with the people selected for the special virtues recognitions and were delighted with the surprise Golden Virtues award for a much favoured and long-serving teacher. The director’s consent for the Teachers Day event and complete financial support cannot be under-estimated when examining the results of this event. It signified his endorsement of the virtues acknowledgements that the teachers had received. Enkhturleg found “they received us better after that. They came to know what virtue is and it became a very good activity” (April 2010). The shared understanding of the value of virtues language to create a happy environment consolidated the growing unity amongst the staff. The “we” voice was more commonly heard in stories relating to the recognizing of virtues during the interviews with the teachers in the middle of the second year of implementing the Virtues Project strategies:
The virtues program became our regular use. From recognizing other people’s virtues, we also learn what wonderful virtues they have etc. We learn from each other. (Enkhturleg, February 2010)

Another noteworthy understanding regarding the Virtues Project strategies inspiring the evolution of a new social practice in the school focused on moral nurturing revolved around the issue of justice and human rights. The Virtues Project promoted amongst the teachers a moral commitment for all to have access to the enriching outcomes of its strategies and that all be treated with equal dignity in being recognised for the virtues they practiced in their engagements with others. All deserved the benefits of personal flourishing resulting from virtues language, whether through acknowledgements, guides or corrections. Tsogzolboo recognised this early on in her experience with The Virtues Project:

There is an idea of non-discrimination in The Virtues Project. I used to leave those students who think they cannot do something alone and give them some simple tasks including preparing small presentation, although I did not need that and know they did not too. So I can encourage them that they can do things. An eleventh grade female student’s teeth are misplaced therefore she could not say words clearly. Who needs her clear pronunciation? So I used to encourage her that she can speak and give her new words to learn, at least learn five words out of ten for a term last year. As she failed to do so I started to give her materials to type and copy but I doubted that she would do it. But she has started to learn new words this year even new texts.

(Tsogzolboo, May 2009)
Becoming a Social Practice for the Moral Nurturing of Students

The notions of the good that the teachers adopted from The Virtues Project, and also generated between them as they implemented the strategies, bore fruit in student engagements with their teachers, with each other and with their learning. Many virtues, even those beyond the scope of the originally listed 52, found purchase in the conscious intentions in daily responses of the students during their school day. The nurturative power of teachers, which motivated the use of the virtues language in students, fostered in students their capacity to exercise nurturative power towards each other as well as towards their teachers, thereby creating a situation of integrative power flow within the group.

The Virtues Connection teachers systematically implemented more strategies beyond the familiar virtues acknowledgements after they went through the three-day Virtues Project facilitator training. Teachable moments and integration of virtues recognition into lesson content, virtues-based boundaries and virtues corrections, and spiritual companioning were systematically applied in lessons and in teacher-student relationships. As the teachers established more, and varied, identity-making and relationship-building activities of this new social practice, their proficiency with the strategies gave them confidence to bring more students into its sphere.

The Virtues Project advocates the concept of the teachable moment instead of set moral education lessons, though lessons on specific virtues are not discouraged. The power of the teachable moment is used by teachers in virtues language dialogue with their students when they acknowledge, guide or correct students as a virtues practice, or the absence of it, occurs. The teachable moment is not an uncommon concept in English-speaking education and seeks to meet the learning needs of
individual children. Virtues language is intended for the teachable moment in the teacher-student encounter. As teachers come to know individual students for the qualities that are their strengths or those that are weakly understood and practiced, they can use virtues language to encourage the child towards greater awareness of how they are applying, and how they could apply, the virtues they may not understand so well. Enkhturleg used this understanding to “activate” students at the moment of action when she could immediately narrate the action moment into a story to highlight the appropriate virtue:

Teachable moments strategy, I basically use this strategy for all my classes.

Teachers have to activate the children in addition to teaching them subjects.

But we forgot our duty of activating the students. We just used to say negative comments to students. You didn’t do your homework and so on. I tried to activate the children, “You did your best.” “There is an improvement.” “You were responsible.” “If you do this, your grade will improve this much,” and so on. I encourage them to be more active, more responsible by recognizing their efforts and helped them to see their hidden, vague virtues inside of them. (Enkhturleg, February 2010)

Similarly, virtues learning can be applied in subject content when a particularly appropriate example of some virtue or virtues the teacher has judged to be timely for student learning can be highlighted through the subject content in some way. This can be done in a short reflective comment or question, or it can be the point of a learning sequence that builds subject skills and concepts. Bileg-Oyun implemented another special project amongst the mathematics teachers that focused on virtues integration into mathematics learning for grades six to nine—Mathematics in Our Personality. The mathematics teachers involved chose “proportion” as their topic and created mathematics problems in line with the curriculum on Ulaanbaatar’s air
pollution problem using figures provided by the city authority. Bileg-Oyun opened her lesson with grade 6.1 to any teacher who wished to observe it (April 2010). She judged the project to be very successful. It gave her an idea for classroom textbooks.

We implemented a project named Mathematics in Our Personality. We organized that project for a month and the classes were very nice. Until now, there’s no subject like that connecting our lesson with personality for 40 minutes. In my opinion, we should consider it with our education and the authors of the textbooks should pay attention on this when they write the textbooks. (Bileg-Oyun, April 2010)

The virtues-based boundaries strategy was adapted to the classroom situation in several ways. Enkhturleg gave an example of how she identified the virtues of respect and orderliness in relation to the use and care of the geography cabinet in her room for two “undisciplined classes” (February 2010). In another example, Bolormelmii had a problem with students using their cell phones in her classes in previous years. In the second school year of the fieldwork phase, she established a boundary for her class of no cell phone use, pointing out the virtue of respect through attentive listening, which proved to be successful for her (February 2010). Ireedui gave an example of developing a lesson format that introduced two new virtues at the beginning of each lesson, which were briefly described, and then framed in terms of how they could be practiced during the lesson and then showed the virtues guide quality of a virtues-based boundary. She would then acknowledge students for practicing this virtue during the lesson, and give a virtues correction to those who needed to be guided “in the right direction” (February 2010).

The social practice evolving in the school had at its core the purpose of morally nurturing students. Bolormelmii had commented that students were disrespectful and
demanding towards each other prior to the Virtues Project training beginning in the school. Her response during that time was to pretend she didn’t hear their talk, believing they would not listen to her anyway (May 2009). Student positive talk improved as teachers more regularly recognised and acknowledged their virtues. Bolormelmii observed that as she utilised virtues corrections it enabled her to “better understand their mistakes and they would not do that mistake again” (February 2010). As a practitioner within a morally nurturing social practice in her school, Bolormelmii found her teaching capacity increase as well as a love for her profession. She also found that students benefited from this practice and concluded, “I think we need to implement virtues in our every single step” (February 2010). In addition, she observed a positive flow of competitive power when she would acknowledge one student and all students “start competing” in the practice of virtues so they too can be acknowledged (April 2010). Virtues language changed the flow of power between teachers and students to one of respecting, protecting and encouraging the flourishing of the children in their care. Nurturing moral ways of being, doing and living also empowered children to use these positive forms of power with each other.

In the last months of the fieldwork phase, teachers were putting the different strategies together and adapting some of the activities from the original workshop for student learning. To the virtues lesson format, which hinged on the sharing circle, Enkhturleg added learning and practice in the virtues “sandwich” approach. Students learned from the sandwich concept to give a virtues correction in a respectful way for their peers by prefacing it with a virtues acknowledgment and following it by a “virtues thank you”. She also gave students music to listen to and interpret in terms of virtues, and pictures of nature to observe the virtues inherent in nature, to sensitize
students to a greater recognition of virtues in different contexts (April 2010). Ireedui continued her virtues integrative approach in her mathematics lessons and reported that students were now becoming “more active in the class,” declaring “it’s not that difficult, even children will get proper understanding about virtues” (April 2010). Multiplying the number of experiences for voicing the virtues resulted in expanded student understandings and made many more virtues accessible to them to interpret in their own way within their actions.

**Becoming a Social Practice for the Moral Nurturing of Teachers**

Following their own training as Virtues Project facilitators in May 2009, the Virtues Connection teachers began receiving requests to teach in classes of teachers who wanted to learn from them about how to implement the strategies into their lessons (Bileg-Oyun, June 2009). With the launching of the virtues lesson component in the Tuesday morning student lesson at the beginning of the school year, the Virtues Connection teachers were in great demand to assist with planning these lessons so Asralt could see the planning in their books as she required it. Asralt assigned the team to different homeroom teachers to assist them more systematically. A number of teachers asked the Virtues Project facilitators to teach the lessons for them, and some expected them to teach this portion and give them time off. The voice of demand for respect and obedience was met with a morally nurturing response from the younger teachers. They happily assisted with planning alongside the homeroom teacher, taught one lesson as a demonstration for the teacher, and then observed a lesson taught by the teacher themselves, giving them analysis feedback in much the same way they had received feedback during their own training (Ireedui, November 2009). Those who chose to remain absent from the first demonstration
lesson were not offered a repeat of this kind of service but were given the space to be ready to request again, but this time with the assurance they would remain in the classroom. By April 2010, there were many teachers who were requesting further training and a number wanting to become Virtues Project facilitators themselves (Ireedui, April 2010).

Notions of rank in a top-down hierarchy associated with negative forms of power resulting from this social structure were strong social forces that Asralt and her teachers continued to address in their nurturing of the remaining staff. It was “difficult to communicate this way [virtues language] with the older teachers, whom we don’t socialize with,” shared Bileg-Oyun, believing “they would think, ‘What is this thing you are talking about?’” (June 2009). Asralt herself was drawn to the old ways to move the teachers resistant to change, thinking “in order to make difference, we should monitor teachers whether they teach the lesson or not, and, if not, we should reinforce retribution such as reducing salary amount” (June 2009). The socialist practice of honouring people with awards and medals generated strong competition between people, though this was not always of a negative kind. The Virtues Connection facilitators conceived an idea in which this concept could be woven into a project that involved the director and training managers as judges of a demonstration lesson competition. This way they could learn for themselves how their teachers were integrating virtues recognition into Mongolian subject lessons without appearing to be “taught” by the younger teachers. It was a successful project.

One meeting we were talking about how to use virtues for the demonstrative lessons. That would be great to connect virtues to subject lessons. For example at the lesson for the student who was good, we can acknowledge by using virtues in the middle. About the lesson: We have demonstrative lesson
competition. We will choose topic of the subject but not class. We may teach any class. Then at the demonstrative lesson the director and training managers will observe. Yeah. While teachers are teaching lessons we can use proper virtues to acknowledge them. For example students work out in a team. One student’s teamwork was very good. So for example to [student] I acknowledge your team working skills etc. (Enkhturleg, November 2009)

Making mistakes was also opened to interpretive negotiation. As the young teachers enthusiastically engaged in implementing the Virtues Project strategies, encouraged by the surprising and welcome support offered by the director and social worker in ways they had not before experienced, they made many mistakes. Asralt first highlighted this phenomenon after the three-day facilitator training:

We are prepared as facilitators wholeheartedly, and then still show moral inadequacy. We as people, who talk about the virtues, behave like moral people who have developed them, but in reality we still act inadequately once in a while and the core quality of characteristic is still the same… They cannot make mistakes themselves since they have attended the training. Therefore they should prepare themselves in terms of professional as well as all other performance. It is clear what would happen if these teachers make mistake. (Asralt, June 2009)

The sense of accountability that Asralt expected from the teachers was based on an understanding that the nature of a teacher is to be perfect. In reality, teachers are never perfect, though they may strive to attain such a lofty goal. The young teachers also needed coaching in how to manage the new dimensions of power with which they were experiencing success. Asralt decided on a course of patient reminding in a staff meeting in August, a negotiated approach between her new and old understandings (June 2009). Instead of cutting their salary or reporting them to
the education ministry authorities when they were at fault, she gave them an indirect virtues correction. In February 2010, a misjudgement on the part of two Virtues Project facilitators occurred when they chose to carry out their first “virtues training” of factory workers instead of attending the school staff meeting. It is possible the school staff meeting was called at the last minute, as was often the way with many events happening in the school, even in the way the education ministry organized their meetings and events for directors. Conducting moneymaking activities outside of school was not frowned upon, indeed, the training manager herself conducted business with other teachers in a ladies cosmetics sales program. The principle at stake here was the professional requirement to attend staff meetings. The director was visibly angry and very upset that the teachers had missed the meeting. He was having difficulty negotiating the traditional response to the non-adherence of the job commitment principle with the virtues language response he was still struggling to fully understand, though he was attracted to it. He sought advice on how to proceed with correcting the Virtues Project facilitator teachers involved and then applied the virtues correction in a special meeting he had with the teachers to bring them to task. The two teachers shared this experience and their surprise at receiving a virtues correction from their director with their colleagues. Though it appeared as though the director was not as stern as he may have been in the past, the teachers respected the point he made and adjusted their plans accordingly.

Enkhturleg’s prediction in February 2010 regarding teacher professionalism involved a journey of negotiations with others as each endeavoured to become a better teacher. It also involved greater understanding of what that accountability might entail with the new skills and possibilities opening up.
[Virtues Project] helps people to find themselves, creates more orderliness and discipline. It shows and opens the path to wellbeing. There are many advantages on this Virtues Project. If we implement The Virtues Project successfully… teachers will have strong principles and perspectives for their work and life. (Enkhturleg, February 2010)

The young teachers gave a great deal of their time and effort to further their own training in The Virtues Project. Once they had become facilitators, they eagerly embraced training other teachers in their school, going well beyond their job description requirements. Their dedication to implementing the strategies of The Virtues Project to enrich their own teaching methods, to facilitate the moral flourishing of their students, to consolidate the new skills in their colleagues’ teaching and to establish warmer relationships between everyone in the school community was clearly evident. Enkhturleg highlighted the continued integrative power shared between the original Virtues Connection teachers as they progressed in their training and the implementation of the Virtues Project strategies.

Two-day training was interesting. But people have different opinions. At the end of the training, 11 people wanted to continue. In my opinion, three-day training was very effective. We confirmed our concept and understanding of virtues [learned] at the two-day training. At the three-day training the five strategies were reviewed. So we got deep comprehension on it in order to [teach others] not to just to [implement]. So we will divide topics. Can we teach all four [of the remaining strategies]? More interesting, we can divide topics [and specialise]. We need to exchange our ideas [gained from our different experiences]. (Enkhturleg, November 2009)

Ireedui was perhaps the most vocal about how difficult it was for her “to implement the virtues during the class period as it was not typical habit for me, but
now it became one of the typical methods that I use during the class period” (February 2010). It was the continued accompaniment she received from her colleagues that encouraged her as she dedicated herself to fully committing to developing the strategies in her practice with students and other teachers. The freely given accountability between these teachers to support each other in a close collaborative group was generated in an enriching collaborative-expressive moral space that the recognition of virtues in relationships had created.

Enkhturleg reflected on their learning as trainers of teachers, sharing that “we are doing our training as a team so when we get new ideas we note it as a team” and revealing as a team that they were also courageous and experienced enough to make changes to the introductory training program to clarify and streamline it to better use the time available (April 2010). Bileg-Oyun reflected on the 18 months that had passed since the introduction of The Virtues Project into the school:

This academic year plan is almost implemented. Almost with 200% and I am planning to do next year’s work plan. I want to request about it from the director like this. We will become Virtues Project master facilitators. We are experienced in this kind of way. Please give us a homeroom class. And we want to have a virtues cabinet in our classroom. Among us only Enkhturleg is class teacher. We need to think about it. (Bileg-Oyun, April 2010)

The teachers felt their professional capacity had increased to the point where they had now become worthy homeroom teachers capable of morally nurturing children with greater skills than many of the older teachers who were not as familiar with such morally nurturing strategies.
**Becoming a Recognized School**

As a result of establishing a new social practice for nurturing morality through The Virtues Project, the climate of the whole school was transformed. The school came to be recognized, beyond its school boundaries, for the growth of a positive school moral climate.

Every year child-centred school gets award in citywide. Till now three schools have received this award. Our school became a child-centred school. Our virtues union teachers… helped so much for this. (Bileg-Oyun, April 2010)

For the Virtues Connection team there was a very meaningful recognition from the school community during the Teachers Day celebration. They received the nomination as “the team being the most beneficial to children,” and the school management placed their “picture on the board of honour” in the school entryway (Tsogzolboo, April 2010).

**Creating Morally Nurturing Webs Beyond the School**

The experience of the transformation of selves as human beings, of professional relationships into supportive colleagues and friends, of the teacher-student engagements into sites of moral nurturing, and of the school’s progress in developing a morally nurturing environment emboldened the teachers to become trainers of other teachers in other schools, and further, to become trainers of teacher trainers.
The Narrative Context

The school now had 11 Virtues Project facilitators who became active in implementing the 90-day plan in the school, which carried on in earnest in the new school year beginning September 2009. As well as the ongoing professional development training meetings and the weekly 20-minute virtues lesson there were a number of other activities initiated in the school by the Virtues Connection team. Enkhturleg trained two groups of student teachers assigned to the school. Enkhturleg, Bileg-Oyun, Ireedui and Asralt conducted several Virtues Project training workshops for parents, first beginning with the parents of Enkhturleg’s grade six homeroom students. Bileg-Oyun was encouraged by Asralt to design an extracurricular club for students. She called this the Smile Club and received approval by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, which came with a MNT 50,000 grant. This Club was still functioning at the close of the fieldwork. Bileg-Oyun, with the assistance of Ireedui, held a month-long campaign called Virtues in Maths, during which time she promoted the integration of virtues in mathematics and opened her lessons for observation by other teachers.

In November 2009, Ulaanbaatar experienced an outbreak of swine flu and schools throughout the city were closed for a month. Teachers were recalled back to school after two weeks, and this provided a window of opportunity to organize a teacher-training event. The director of another school in the city expressed an interest in her teachers receiving two days of Virtues Project training, and so the Gifts of Character workshop was held in the other school in mid-December. This workshop was also opened up to other interested educators, which most notably included the

\[18\] The exchange rate between the Mongolian tugrik and the Australian dollar was MNT 1,425 to AUD 1.00, making MNT 50,000 equivalent to AUD 35.
director and six trainers from the Mongolian Education Alliance, a Mongolian teacher training organization responsible for the majority of in-service teacher training in the country for the education ministry and for international development agencies, such as the World Bank and the United Nations. The group also included a school director who managed a successful traditional Mongolian moral education project covering 40 inner city schools. Four of the new Virtues Project facilitators spent four meetings planning for the training of 60 participants, which Asralt, the seven Virtues Connection teachers, and two primary teachers facilitated together. The feedback from their participants encouraged the new facilitators. Tsogzolboo returned at least twice to the new school to hear their experiences in implementing the Virtues Project strategies and to share more of her own school’s ideas and experiences.

The Virtues Project facilitators initiated activities inspired by The Virtues Project with other community groups outside the school. Enkhturleg, Bileg-Oyun and Ireedui conducted the Gifts of Character two-day workshop with a group of 15 kindergarten teachers. Bolormelmii conducted a shortened introductory workshop for eight couples from amongst her family and friends. Bileg-Oyun, Bolormelmii, Enkhturleg, Ireedui and Tsogzolboo were invited by the Mongolian Education Alliance to conduct the introductory two-day workshop for 20 participants, who were all teacher trainers, directors and teachers from various schools in the city. Asralt connected Shijirtuya, Bolordusal and Ireedui with a Caritas (an NGO) orphanage where they conducted weekly virtues lessons for the children. Bolordusal and

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19 The Mongolian Education Alliance (www.mea.org.mn), established as an NGO in 2004, strengthens and sustains “open society values such as transparency, accountability, participation, equal access in the Mongolian education sector”; identifies “underserved areas of educational reform,” and initiates “projects supporting reform in teacher development, student centred learning, and community involvement,” http://www.mad-mongolia.com/ulaanbaatar-city-guide/mongolian-education-alliance-10459/.
Shijirtuya also conducted several virtues lessons for juvenile prisoners in the city. Encouraged by the training manager in the school, Enkhturleg conducted Virtues Project training sessions for colleagues in an outside home networking business they were both involved in. Enkhturleg and Ireedui conducted weekly one hour Virtues Project training for groups of the 1,000 employees in a local cashmere factory. Bileg-Oyun and Bolormelii trained 66 teachers in a provincial capital in the far west of Mongolia.

Asralt was interviewed in early February 2010 to review the progress of implementing the 90-day plan in the school and in preparation for the next set of interviews. Asralt, the seven original Virtues Connection teachers, one new member, seven other teachers from both primary and secondary sections of the school, and the primary school training manager were then interviewed during February 2010. This set of interviews asked questions about the nature of the impact of The Virtues Project on students, teachers and the school; the ways the five strategies were applied in the classroom; the compatibility of The Virtues Project with personal beliefs and spiritual understandings; what makes The Virtues Project acceptable to Mongolians; what a school fully implementing the Virtues Project strategies might look like; and the perceived strengths of The Virtues Project.

On 17 April 2010, Asralt gave a presentation on the school’s experience with implementing the Virtues Project strategies at a forum held at the World Bank office in Ulaanbaatar on “A Dialogue on Moral Education in Mongolia,” organized by concerned individuals and the Mongolian Education Alliance. This was attended by 80 people from the education field: school directors and teachers, education academics and researchers, government policy makers, education officers from international development agencies, and staff and trainers from civil society groups.
implementing various moral education programs. Included in the program were the social worker of the school with teachers who had been trained in The Virtues Project at the end of the previous year, and the director of the traditionally based moral education program who had attended Virtues Project training by the school’s then new Virtues Project facilitators. Other moral education program representatives from different religious and non-governmental organisations and groups were also present, all discussing their achievements and challenges in their experiences of developing and implementing moral education programs in Ulaanbaatar schools.

In mid-April 2010, Bolormelmii, Belig-Oyun, Ireeduit, Enkhturleg, Shijirtuya, Bolordusal and their new Virtues Connection team colleague, met for a celebration event with Galmaa, the original translator for the fieldwork phase of this research project. It was an opportunity for another set of interviews as they shared with her all their achievements while she had been absent. Their sharing became a reflection on the Mongolian experience of engaging with The Virtues Project in an education setting. In mid-May 2010, Asralt, Enkhturleg, Bileg-Oyun, Ireedui, Bolormelmii, Bolordusal and Shijirtuya conducted their first supervised three-day Virtues Project Facilitator workshop. Thirty-two educators attended this training event from eight Ulaanbaatar schools, two universities and the Mongolian Education Alliance teacher training NGO.

The Mongolian Virtues Project facilitators now had the rich experience of giving several training workshops followed by the experience of conducting a “training of trainers” workshop. These achievements supported their nomination for Virtues Project master facilitator recognition. Asralt, Enkhturleg, Bileg-Oyun, Bolormelmii, Ireedui, Tsogzolboo, Bolordusal, Shijirtuya and two primary school
teachers received their Virtues Project Master Facilitator certificates in a televised school ceremony on 12 October 2014.

The activities of the new master facilitators continued to expand. Bileg-Oyun and Bolormelmii continued their connection with the Mongolian Education Alliance. Their cooperative efforts ensured a one-year approval of a five-day introductory course for teachers in The Virtues Project by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. They became instrumental in the training of teachers around the country, often using their school as a venue. Some of the research participants left the school for further education. The remaining master facilitators continued to nurture a rich tradition of The Virtues Project even with the turnover of staff and changes in school leadership.

The Ontological Interpretation of Teacher Narratives on “Creating Moral Nurturing Webs Beyond the School”

The Virtues Project strategies opened the teachers up to flourishing as better selves and better teachers, becoming what they loved and admired through richer dialogical relationships. The teachers found more meaningful ways of teaching students and a deeper purpose in education: awakening the capacity to recognize the moral beauty within for themselves, their students and their colleagues. The teachers’ awakening to the recognition of virtues in the everyday actions of others brought a transformative generosity into their way of teaching and their way of being in relationships. This brought a transformative and generous purposing into their human engagements, which created warmth and closeness between people and established the flow of integrative power, collaborative purpose and unity within the webs of relationships that comprised the school community. Teachers and students shared
their love and admiration for virtues in action, freely given and freely acknowledged with an authentic generous motivation. The teachers exercised their nurturative power through virtues correction language and the setting of virtues-based boundaries.

*Engaging With Groups in the School Periphery and Beyond*

The Virtues Project facilitators were not content to keep this within the school bounds. They sought to share what they had learned with their families, friends, teaching colleagues in other schools, business and charity connections, and beyond. As early as May 2009, Bolormelmii related the thoughts of the new Virtues Project facilitators:

> I thought and we talked we can visit our own high schools. We wanted to share this idea… how can we organize our work, how we can get funds. First, I can do it for my own school. I can share this useful information, pass this information and start this with them. Also there is possibility to share with my classmates, people at the school; teachers can receive it very well. We talked we should pass this information as soon as possible.

(Bolormelmii, May 2009)

In June 2009, Asralt began thinking about training parents in the Virtues Project strategies, and about how to “organize various kinds of trainings and cooperate with other organizations” (June 2009). By November 2009, Enkhturleg was making concrete plans to conduct a half-day virtues training session with the parents of those students in her homeroom class. “Parents didn’t have enough knowledge about Virtues Project” explained Ireedui, who assisted Enkhturleg (November 2009). Enkhturleg arranged for her students to be part of the Virtues
Project training session with their parents. “When they introduced it to the parents and acknowledged their parents, the parents were happy with that and got the idea,” related Ireedui (November 2009). The success of the first event was followed by other parent training workshops for parents of students in the elementary, middle and high school sections. Asralt found the parent workshops to be productive and useful, and was very encouraged with the parental response.

Whenever we do training for parents, one or two persons comment that this training is useful and want us to teach in their office and spread it. (Asralt, April 2010)

Student teachers assigned to the school during the course of their pre-service training came into contact with the Virtues Connection teachers and requested virtues training. Shijirtuya and Bolordusal conducted a number of one-hour virtues training sessions for student teachers working in their classrooms. The five student teachers working with Enkhturleg requested the full 12 hours of the introductory course, and, in April 2014, she and her homeroom students, whom the student teachers had been working with, conducted a special graduation event for them in the classroom. Bolormelmii and Bileg-Oyun conducted a family virtues training workshop in the school for her family and friends, teaching them how to give virtues acknowledgements and set clear virtues-based boundaries. Their feedback was very positive:

They were speechless and were saying how important it is and wanted to spread it fast to others and were saying let more people hear about this and were giving idea about detailing it inside… My husband came and attended. And he was appreciating how good I was talking and how good I am. He
was so happy and told me to do this work always, that it was useful for people. (Bolormelmii, April 2010)

Engaging With non-Education Organizations Outside the School

Asralt organised for Bolordusal, Ireedui and Shijirtuya to conduct virtues training at a juvenile detention centre and at an orphanage. As well as providing training, Asralt and the teachers involved their students in a service project to give small gifts of juice and notebooks to these less fortunate children (Shijirtuya, April, 2010).

Central to the values underpinning the Virtues Project strategies is the nurturing of virtues recognition, the sensitisation to intentional values in ethical engagement. This is both a learning and a socialization activity because it creates moral understanding and creates warmth in relationships. The social practice of Virtues Project strategies fostered in the school through the forming of the Virtues Connection relational web was strongly embedded in a culture of learning. The original relational web transformed into a nurturing web with and for students, and then with, and for, other teachers, knitting the many webs in the school together.

The friendship and business connections of the teachers in the school opened up opportunities for training adults in the workplace. Enkhturleg, Bileg-Oyun, and Ireedui went to a factory to introduce virtues acknowledgements and conduct sharing circle activities. Enkhturleg noted the reaction from people in the work place was different to that of teachers in education settings. “When we do training people received it in weird way. They said our work is making them bored and they are tired,” she related, and then an attitude change occurred during the session and “they were eager to know what will happen now and what interesting thing is there!”
Enkhturleg found she became a sought after friend, “they want to get some good energy from me. They look at me and they say this is a major change in my life,” which she attributed to the way virtues language can impact people (February 2010).

*Engaging With Other Teachers and Other Schools*

A significant opportunity arose in December 2009 to conduct the two-day introductory workshop for 60 teachers in another inner city school. Five of the Virtues Project facilitators were given release time from the school to conduct their first training workshop with this large group of teachers. The Virtues Connection meetings became more frequent and the focus was on the preparation for the two-day workshop with other teachers. They added their own finishing touches to the already prepared workshop PowerPoint presentations and handouts that they had received from the training that had been previously presented to them, and divided up the presentation tasks between them. In the preliminary meeting with the management team of the other school, the five teacher facilitators shared the school’s first experience with virtues lessons, in which some students served as peer trainers. They found the other school’s management “were so interested in its importance and usefulness,” said Ireedui (November 2009). During the actual workshop, Enkhturleg shared her own personal experience with teachers and parents on her use of The Virtues Project in her homeroom class, much to the delight and approval of the workshop participants.

Their previous teacher in primary school, who is a very experienced teacher, criticized me for making her old students so open, so independent. When the Project implementation went to the mid phase, I organized a parent teacher
conference. Students prepared some bulletin showing the best virtue of their Moms. Students showed what they learned from The Virtues Project… parents were amazed, especially one Mom, who was so against sending her son to the Project, when she received the virtue of love. Her son did not have father for some reason, maybe divorced, or passed way, I don’t know. He gave the virtue of love and care to his mom… Then she was touched and cried. After the conference she said to me, “Thank you so much, you do really work with our children. I misunderstood you. By being involved in The Virtues Project you are so calm and peaceful.” I now organize this meditation called “Love” in our class… it reveals what is in your heart (Teacher participants clapping). (Enkhturleg, December 2009)

Tsogzolboo added her personal understandings to the explanation of the virtues language:

Next, we will discuss about using virtue language at school… During this period wonderful things happen at school. In addition, once we all attended in the virtues training, we should not think that there are bad virtues such as irresponsible, undisciplined etc. we are here for building good virtues all the time. For children you need to improve this virtue, that’s what we need to say for them. We should not say that you were irresponsible and so on. In other words, we should not mention about the bad virtues. (Tsogzolboo, December 2009)

Later she recalled that another school’s social worker approached her after this presentation saying he “was so happy with the findings and said it was exactly what he needed” (April 2010). Ireedui remembered that the teachers they had trained completely changed their initial attitude when they learned they were required to attend the training. They “came in with very strange character asking, why are you
delaying our work? Then teachers became very active while attending our program,” (Ireedui, April 2010).

*The Virtues Project as an Emerging Social Practice in Mongolia*

The training of 60 teachers from other schools opened up avenues for more training. The Mongolian Education Alliance in Ulaanbaatar had some of their teacher trainers attending the workshop and became very interested in continuing their association with The Virtues Project. In the beginning of April 2010, they hosted an introductory workshop and invited the school to release some of their Virtues Project facilitators to conduct the training.

We did training in [teacher-training organization] also. Teachers were very active while attending and it was successful. We taught our schoolteachers...

When new people come new ideas come out from them. (Ireedui, April 2010)

The Virtues Project appeared to be emerging as a social practice in Ulaanbaatar. As the spread of The Virtues Project was widening, the Virtues Project facilitators began organising the induction and training of new practitioners and learning from their ways of knowing and doing, demonstrating the presence of organisational values that feature in other social practices.20

In the middle of that same month, the organisation supported the forum, A Dialogue on Moral Education in Mongolia, in which 80 participants from schools, the education ministry, education researchers, international development sector education agency representatives and non-governmental organisations delivering

20 See the Social Practices section in Chapter Three.
moral education programs in schools attended. Asralt, as a representative of the case study school, made a presentation about the school’s moral education experience with The Virtues Project.

The advantage of the virtues program is people learn the virtues they lack from The Virtues Project and by attending this program people learn the skill of self-belief… We started implementing this program from 2008. As colleagues we worked with many people for the wealth of children… From the second year we decided to do training for parents. We taught students but to make it a habit we decided to study about one virtue two times in a week in class hour. We decided to do this activity to make these virtues a habit for people. We created a virtues union and started doing an activity every two weeks. The consequence and result of this activity was our activity affected others positively for removing the violation of communication and removing pressure and violence facing children in the school environment. (Asralt, April 2010)

Asralt was engaging with the moral education sector in Mongolia, representatives of various protagonists who were coming together for the first time, demonstrating the external values that an emerging social practice develops in order to connect with the broader social environment in which it is embedded. Bileg-Oyun attended a teacher-training event conducted by Mongolian university lecturers who had created a traditionally based moral education program for Mongolian teachers in Mongolian schools. She demonstrated her commitment to the social practice of The Virtues Project through her expression of external values when she saw the commonalities and decided there was a need to collaborate.

[We] are seeing it from a different angle but it is converging to the same point. It’s just about ethics and spirit behind it. So we need to collaborate.
Then only we can involve the public and it will reach society. This is my idea. (Bileg-Oyun, April 2010)

Each of the school’s Virtues Project facilitators connected with “swarms of participants” (Massey, 2010, p. 52) as educators engaging in the pursuit of moral nurturing for, and with, others through The Virtues Project. As initiators of the engagement with swarms of participants, they were instrumental in establishing The Virtues Project as a social practice in their country, demonstrating the necessity of external values for The Virtues Project to establish its identity as a social practice. Other social practice values also emerged, such as goal values that focused on its overall purpose and identity. Asralt articulated the purpose of the school’s involvement with The Virtues Project in her invitation to the forum participants:

If we can do this we can create right person, right group, right colleague and affect each other then it is possible to bring the good result, which we were waiting for. (Asralt, April 2010)

The news of the new training and success the school was experiencing reached the education ministry and the Virtues Connection teachers’ lessons were inspected along with their planning and documentary evidence of training events. Although this came as an extra burden for the new Virtues Project facilitators, who strongly wanted to act and felt the extra work was unjust when other teachers were not subjected to this rigorous inspection, the inspections may well have contributed to the school’s recognition as a child-centred school. This was a signal that a set of social practice identity values that encompassed both moral and living reality became recognised in The Virtues Project by the education ministry that the school and the teachers were responsible to. Epistemic values to do with ways of knowing in a social practice were evident in Enkhturleg’s reflection that, “generally human’s
virtue opens human’s inside world and brings out human’s good virtues” (April 2010). Bolormelmii’s shared reflections about the role virtues play in people’s lives further consolidated this valuing of The Virtues Project as a social practice:

> We have 52 virtues right, I never see these virtues together, we used to mention some virtues but never seen in same time. When I work with children I choose virtues from the 52 virtues, discuss them and think about my own life. Finally I thought about the meaning of this life, the good side and the bad side of this life are all related with our virtues. This is the way I understood the virtues. When people are very stressed with their things because they don’t have enough organizational skill or are not orderly, therefore they push themselves into anger and nervousness. Then they became angry and nervous people. So we need to develop these virtues, study them by ourselves: these kind of virtues we have, we need to develop them, also we should reduce our weaknesses. Because of trying to eradicate weaknesses, we have to develop our virtues. If a person reflects on these things, that person can control herself, can tell herself, “Ooh I shouldn’t do it, there are other ways to do it.” If that person knows these thoughts then it can stop her from bad influences or anger. Therefore we should pass this thing on to as many people as possible. (Bolormelmii, April 2009)

At the end of April 2010, the Virtues Project facilitators requested to be accompanied to conduct a three-day Virtues Project Facilitator workshop. Teachers from the case study school, other schools, and some other participants from the Mongolian Education Alliance who were ready for facilitator training attended the workshop. The familiarity and skills of the facilitators in planning and preparing for the three-day training demonstrated that the procedural values of The Virtues Project
as a social practice were well established in these founding members of The Virtues Project in Mongolia.

The emergent nature of The Virtues Project as a social practice that is not yet well established is evident, because its continuity and decision-making was made vulnerable by its lack of access to funding to produce training materials. However, the story of The Virtues Project as an evolving social practice in Mongolia continued to unfold after the case study fieldwork time period had ended.

Summary

This story reveals the plausibility of the educational coherence of The Virtues Project as experienced by one Mongolian school. The smaller stories of flourishing selves, relationships and community throughout the particular educational engagement retold in this chapter already possessed the kind of validity of knowing that Mongolian teachers had as engaged and embodied human beings. This retelling also contributes a certain kind of validity, at least as understood and analysed using the Listening Guide and through the lens of the conceptual framework laid out in this thesis.

The experiences of the narrating teachers vulnerable to losing their commitment to teaching and then encountering the good in themselves had been not acknowledged before. This is a story of flourishing selves and their transformation into purposeful moral actors whose transformative generosity defined their way of teaching and their way of being in relationship. Acknowledging the good that they respected and admired in others created close relationships between the teachers as they encountered the virtues together, inspiring them to act together in ways that
would enable them to acknowledge the good in others. As the teachers engaged with their students through the use of the virtues language, a morally nurturing web of relationships began to form, and teachers worked on nurturing encounters with the good for students that in turn transformed the students. Emboldened with confidence, the teachers began to embrace the school community in the morally nurturing relational web. They developed features of a social practice for the moral nurturing of students and teachers that enabled the school to achieve citywide recognition as a child-centred school. The school story continued to unfold as the transformative generosity and nurturative power of the teachers motivated them to engage with groups on the school periphery and in the wider community. Then they began to engage with other teachers and other schools, establishing The Virtues Project as an emerging social practice in Mongolia.

The second story unfolding from the narrative contributions of this case study, the dimensions of the cross-cultural coherence of The Virtues Project, is told in Chapter Eight. But first it is necessary to tell a much deeper story, one that requires going outside the narrative contributions of the case study. The next chapter endeavours to understand and place Mongolian being in its culturally and historically embedded context in preparation for the case study story revealing the quest for Mongolian becoming that the engagement with The Virtues Project rekindled within the Mongolian teachers.
Chapter 7: Mongolian Being as Culturally and Historically Embedded

Introduction

I was led to explore this story of the cultural and historical embeddedness of the narrative contributors I was working with because there was something deeper in their engagement with me that I did not have any knowledge of. What was emerging throughout the dialogical engagements with the teachers and management team was something contrapuntal, in harmony with their voices. I was first drawn to the teachers’ articulation of “close communication,” oir dotno, which they had responded to as an encounter with moral beauty. This alerted me to Mongolian moral goods that Mongolians heard and expressed in contrapuntal tones, which are deeply sourced and embedded in history and culture. At first I had relied on the Listening Guide analysis of the case study narrative contributions to yield up these contrapuntal sources, but these remained tacit in the narrative texts. Retrieving these contrapuntal voices was a more difficult task and required the historical and cultural articulation in this chapter.

To uncover and make sense of these tacit and unfamiliar sources, I turned to Taylor’s understanding of the need to articulate the historical and cultural and his methodology of historical anthropological inquiry.21 To understand, or at least to

21 Good examples of historical anthropological inquiries are Sources of the Self and A Secular Age (C. Taylor, 1989, 2007).
begin to understand, the Mongolian sensibility and consciousness I relied on his understanding of a moral form of life as an expression of people’s humanity, history and culture, as well as present challenges and aspirations, which are so often unarticulated in narratives that interpret particular experiences (C. Taylor, 1989, 2007). This chapter retrieves and articulates the contrapuntal voices from Mongolian history and culture that enable a richer understanding of the Mongolian teachers’ narrative tales of experiencing and implementing The Virtues Project. It is consistent with the Tayloren account of the self and the moral form of life.

This historical and cultural articulation serves as the backdrop to the second story arising out of the case study: the cross-cultural coherence of The Virtues Project in a Mongolian setting. This chapter outlines Mongolia’s nomadic way of life; identifies the Mongol Uls,22 translated today as Mongolians, the People of the Felt-Walled Tents, and explores the moral horizons of the past that Mongolians are still embedded in today. This chapter makes the claim that Mongolians today are seeking a modern Mongolian identity and finding this a challenging task in the face of the growing moral pluralism since their borders were opened to many others from around the globe.23

The Mongolian case study school is one of many similar inner-city government schools in Ulanbaatar. Its cultural history is distinctly different from that of Western culture. The school community is contained in Soviet architecture and its teachers trained in a Soviet socialist pedagogy, embedded in communist ideological

22 The Mongol Uls sometimes means Mongol polity, and at other times Mongol people. Rather than use Mongolia, a polity, and Mongolians, the people, I have used the term Mongol Uls for both to underscore the sense of continuity of identity that is embedded in history. I have kept the same term for both senses and as a result sometimes the term is treated as a singular term and at others a plural term.

23 A glossary of Mongolian terms can be found in Appendix M, and a selection of photographs of Mongolia, taken by the author and her family, can be found in Appendix N.
understandings of educational hierarchy and methodology. The school is in close proximity to the focal point of the city, the Great Khural, the national parliament, and therefore the teachers and students are more likely to be in contact with and influenced by the international globalizing forces that are entering this post-communist country. During this time of transition, a unique dynamic of cross-cultural educational engagements are being experienced by Mongolians as the confluence of their strongly embedded indigenous nomadic past and recent socialist ideology are being dramatically merged with a hegemonic neo-liberal internationalism. The case study provides a unique vantage point to explore the cross-cultural dimensions of The Virtues Project as experienced by a Mongolian school community.

**Mongol Nomadic Way of Life**

The Eurasian continent has a vast area of grassland valleys at its centre known as the steppes. The eastern half of Central Eurasia is of much higher elevation than that of the west, on average 1,500 metres above sea level, and is often referred to as Inner Asia (Barfield, 1992, p. 16). For three millennia or more, a pastoral nomadic way of life has been the persistent and only successful form of life in the extremely cold winters of the semi-arid grassland valleys and mountain slopes of the Mongolian steppe (Bold, 2013, p. 61). The way of life possible on the treeless steppes has influenced the histories, cultures and identities of the nomadic peoples in its centre, as well as the settled northern Chinese in the more lush pastureland to the south, and the mixed nomadic and settled cultures of the east-lying Manchurian and west-lying Turkic peoples, who all make up the area known as Inner Asia (Barfield,
1992, p. 16). Over many centuries, the indigenous pastoral nomadic groups, known for almost a millennium as the Mongols, have been living on the steppes, flowing with the needs of their mixed animal herds and the availability of grass in seasonal migrations, existing as an integrated part of a balanced Mongolian steppe habitat (Bold, 2013, p. 72; Fijn, 2011, p. 59). The daily way of life and understanding of this life that has evolved as a result of these conditions became an enduring nomadic culture that founded a large, complex and influential society.

**Living With Herding Animals**

The everyday context for Mongol nomads is distinctive for the migratory pattern of living with their animals. The relationships between people and animals that “inhabit” the nomadic encampment support the survival and flourishing of each, which, in an ethnographic account of Mongolian human-animal co-existence in pastoral nomadism, Fijn describes as an “ecosocial sphere” (Fijn, 2011, p. 55). There are five types of animal families, and of these the horse is the most valued. Men, women and children are all accomplished horse riders having, for millennia, learned to ride from as young as three years old (Bold, 2013, p. 126). Horses make possible the care and management of the nomadic herding animals that need to roam widely over the open and unfenced steppe pastures, in contrast to the intensive farming practices of a non-migratory and settled animal husbandman. The rugged nomadic man has long been judged by the health and quality of his horse and may hardly be considered human without a horse. Nomadic men give great importance to their

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24 These five groups of livestock are referred to in Mongolian as the “five snouts” (Barzagur, 2002), p.24. They are sheep, goats, yaks, horses and camels, all present in varying proportions depending on the types of grass and natural resources found across the Mongolian steppe even today, with the exception of the reindeer-focused nomadic groups residing in the very northern tip of Mongolia (Barfield, 2001, p. 14).
An Exploration of The Virtues Project

tradition of choosing and training their riding horse (Fijn, 2011, p. 151). The horse is so closely associated with the self in this cultural ontology that even female city-dwelling Mongolians will sometimes question their own Mongol identity if they cannot ride a horse (Kaplonski, 2004, p. 27). The highly prized *morin khuur*, literally meaning horse-head violin, has its scroll carefully carved into a talismanic horse head and can be played to make sounds like a galloping or whinnying horse (Fijn, 2011, p. 158).

The milk from each of the five animals is precious, particularly mare’s milk, and is traditionally the staple of the summer diet for the nomads. Milk, or *suu*, used to make *suutei tsai*, a salty tea with milk, is processed into many different types of dried curd and made into *airag*, a fermented festive drink (Zhukovskaya, 2008, p. 307). *Suu* is a sacred symbol of purity and is used to sprinkle on a rider’s stirrups for a safe journey, as an offering to deities, or outside the entrance to the *ger*, the traditional nomadic tent home, at the beginning of the day; today, it is also sprinkled on the tyres of a vehicle before a journey (Bikales, 2001, pp. 88-89; Fijn, 2011, p. 63). Meat from all the animals is a staple of the winter diet for the nomad when a beast can be slaughtered and easily stored in the outside freezing conditions for gradual consumption. The dairy and meat diet is still the preferred food of today’s Mongolian, so much so that many Mongolians say they cannot go a day without eating meat.

Each animal has a thick wool winter coat, which is collected each spring and during the summer for the production of felt. Felt, an important insulation product, lines the traditional leather boots with upturned toes and the traditional high-collared coat, known as *deel* for much needed warmth in the bitterly cold winters. Large blankets of felt are used to wrap the *ger* to serve as a very effective insulation (Bold,
Goats produce cashmere wool that is much sought after in today’s fashion world, and camels, the ultimate nomadic beast of burden, shed large quantities of wool in the spring that is just as warm and light. Leather from these animals is used for the Mongolian boots, ropes to tie down the layers of the *ger*, and horse-riding gear.

The nomadic lifestyle is an economical one, with material goods restricted to what is easily sourced from the animals and can fit into the *ger*. Even with today’s technology, which has added vehicles for transportation and satellite dishes and electronic goods to nomadic life, it is a frugal material existence. In contrast to its material simplicity, the domain of the encampment is richly complex for its meaningful structure and cosmologically informed behavioural patterns, most particularly within the felt walls of the circular nomadic tent (Bruun, 2006, p. 100).

*Living in Felt-Walled Tents: Ger Life*

The Mongol nomadic way of life is also distinctive for the felt-walled tent, the *ger*, which is a space of crucial importance beyond mere protection from the elements for the people living within its walls. The customary construction and placement of its internal structures and the required behaviour and movement of people within this *ger* space reflect the cosmological and social values of Mongol nomadic life, as explains Lindskog, a Norwegian social anthropologist (Lindskog, 2000, pp. 11-12). The space within the felt walls of the *ger* represents the Mongol nomadic cosmological interpretation of the physical and spiritual spheres, the place of human beings within it, and the identities and destinies in nomadic society (Lindskog, 2000, p. 5; Sarangerel, 2000, p. 10; Wickham-Smith, 2009, pp. 8-9).
The inner space circles around the gal golomt, the fireplace at the heart of the ger. It is a sacred place underneath the apex of the arched ceiling where there is a sky opening framed by a wooden ring standing on two poles with spines radiating from it, like the spokes of a wheel, to rest on the concertina wooden wall frames. This sky window, through which the stove flue passes, represents, for some, the gateway to the upper world. The column of smoke from fire to sky is claimed by Sarangerel to be the “world tree” that shamans use to enter into the upper world to be the communication channel between the entities in the celestial heaven and those in the temporal world (Sarangerel, 2000, p. 10). British anthropologist, Caroline Humphrey, observes that the column of smoke symbolizes the cosmological centre from the hearth at the centre of the ger towards the sky, a centre that moves in relation to its place on the earth’s surface yet never moves in its relation to the sky, placing each ger, metaphorically at least, at the centre of the universe (Humphrey, 1995, p. 142).

In replication of the open steppe, physical walls do not divide the inner space of the ger, yet space is distinctly divided to represent the order of the cosmos. Situated on the northern side of the ger is the khoimor, the most honoured place where sacred objects and valued images are kept. The southern side is the lowlier site where the door is situated. The western side is the area in which public affairs are conducted and where items used outside are stored, while the eastern side is the space for domestic affairs and where inside things are stored. When guests arrive they take their place on the western side, and the family of the house sit on the eastern side (Fijn, 2011, p. 61; Pegg, 2001, pp. 171-172; Sarangerel, 2000, p. 8). People entering through the south-facing door in the felt walls must move in a “sun-wise” (clockwise) direction, with the exception of women who may move in the
direction of the moon (counter to that of the sun) to go directly to the east side (Pegg, 2001, p. 172; Sarangerel, 2000, p. 10). The movement and relationships in the ger are in dynamic balance around the fulcrum of the fire. Lindskog interprets these as representative of hierarchical values, in the contexts of age, gender and social standing in society, and as expressed in terms of directionality: upper and lower, north and south, east and west (Lindskog, 2000, p. 228). Humphrey interprets the seeming correlation of the western side with maleness and public arena as an indication of a “male-focused social organization” (Humphrey, 1995, pp. 143-144). However, the interpretive frames from other cultural contexts may not grasp the full import of the play of dynamic balance in social positioning and physical movement in the nomadic context of the ger, which may give equal weight to either end of the conceptual axes that metaphorically balance around the fire.

The ger is just as relevant for nomadic families living with their animals in the Mongolian countryside today as it has been for centuries. Easily dismantled and erected within an hour and transported anywhere, the ger has been the construction of choice, even in towns surrounding the Buddhist monasteries in the past. Today the Mongolian countryside also features many ger camps for tourists and Mongolians to use, and there are large areas in the capital city, Ulaanbaatar, called ger districts, which lie on the periphery of the aging Russian apartment blocks and modern high-rises at its centre.

**Living in Khot-Ail Groups**

The nomadic encampment may appear to be isolated and unconnected to other nomadic encampments dotted through in the steppe valleys of Inner Asia, but this is not the case. There are close connections between groups of encampments. It is not
uncommon for an encampment to have several *ger* in very close proximity, and if they are not physically close they will usually have a close connection with encampments in valleys a little further away. Bold, a Mongolian anthropologist, explains that a single family does not have all the resources of people, beasts of burden, specialist equipment or the knowledge of available pastureland that nomadic livestock keeping demands (Bold, 1996, p. 69). *Khot ail*, literally meaning “town/city family,” is the Mongolian term for a number of *ger* with emotional and relational closeness (Lindskog, 2010, p. 112). The placement of each *ger* in the same encampment seems to be relationally defined with similar parameters to the dynamic balancing within the *ger*. Lindskog notes of the *khot ail* she lived in during the 1990s that the positioning of the father’s *ger* was significantly between the *ger* of his two sons (Lindskog, 2000, p. 76).

A thirteenth century report by William of Rubruck notes the arrangement of *ger* of the wives of rich men where the first wife’s *ger* was positioned to the west and the lowest ranked wife to the east, seemingly along an axis of social standing (Lane, 2006, p. 54). British anthropologists, Humphrey and Sneath, who identify *khot ail* as modern day herder “residential groupings,” and Danish international development researchers, Bruun and Odgaard, separately observe *khot ail* membership as being fluid from season to season and year to year, and based on blood, marriage and sometimes friendship (Humphrey & Sneath, 1999, p. 139; Odgaard, 1996, p. 130). In the *khot ail* relationship, the individual family’s assets, including animals, are not shared, however the advantage of *khot ail* is the sharing in labour tasks and living security for poor families with loans of food and livestock (Odgaard, 1996, p. 130). The ethical strength of family and friendship bonds are crucially important for *khot ail* union. Bold suggests this could be the reason for the three variants in the *khot ail*
structure: all are family relations; a core are related families with unrelated families they have close friendship with; and, unrelated families who have close friendship (Bold, 2013, pp. 136-138). He claims that living together in this way contributes to better agreements about the use of pasture and resources (Bold, 1996, p. 76).

Size also indicates that khot ail may be economically based, claims Bold, as the number of ger is dependent on the availability of natural resources in the particular region of the steppe the group happen to be in, changing as needs change through the seasons, even becoming cyclical in nature (Bold, 1996, p. 80). Various sources indicate the number of ger in a typical khot ail to be two to three, usually during the winter season, and from four to eleven most typically in the summer season (Bold, 2013, p. 139; Fijn, 2011, p. 56; Humphrey & Sneath, 1999, pp. 159, 174; Lindskog, 2010, p. 19). The ger is conceptualized by Lindskog as being surrounded by concentric circles of activity—from the concentration of people, animals and activity at its centre to dispersion of the same (Lindskog, 2000, pp. 111-112). The inside circle incorporates the cluster of ger and enclosures for animals, and is where children play, produce is made and repairs happen; the next circle is where animals are milked and kept overnight; and the outer circle is the grazing pastures (Lindskog, 2000, pp. 64-65). Fijn’s description of the ger encampment as an “ecosocial sphere” aligns with Lindskog’s interpretation of the concentric circles of activity comprising the space of the ger.

**Evolution of Khot-Ail Grouping**

The term khot ail seems not to have come into use until as late as the nineteenth century (Bold, 1996, p. 72). This could be an indication of the influence of the Chinese social organisation of towns and cities through the Manchu rule of
Mongol nomadic administrative, territorial and economic systems, which included institutionalizing the traditional form of grouping, known then as *ail*, into *khot ail*.25

Prior to the era of the Mongol Empire in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the traditional nomadic grouping form was *khuree*, which were large livestock-keeping groups united for economic, military and territorial administration purposes whose many *ger* would be arranged in a circle for defence purposes (Bold, 1996, p. 69). Today, *ger* are arranged in a row in *khot ail*, and the concentric circles of activity radiating out from this centre (Lindskog, 2010, pp. 20-21).

Chinggis Khaan26 united the many nomadic polities as subjects under his leadership by the early thirteenth century. He not only did away with the need to arrange the *ger* for defence, he also homogenized the membership of *khot ail* so the subjects of various conquered nomadic leaders would form strong bonds of loyalty across previous grouping networks. These *khot ail* were administrative as well as military units because each *khot ail* was expected to deliver 10 warriors and all their mares and provisions in times of war. This was the basis of the “decimal” system Chinggis Khaan and his successors utilized to structure the new super-sized polity they had created in the steppe. Each group of 10 with their own leader were part of 100 with a leader, and so on until 10,000, known as a *tumen*, with prominent leaders that answered directly to the khaan of the empire. The Mongols measured the size of their army by units of 10,000 and did not have strict geographical territory but had assigned areas of pastoral resources as needed (Bold, 2013, pp. 157-158).

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25 For the sake of consistency in reading this chapter the term *khot ail* is used hereafter for referring to the encampment of more than one *ger*, whatever the historical era, though the actual term used at the time of the era in focus was different. Modern day understanding of *ail* is family, so to minimize confusion the term *ail ger* is used in the place of family.

26 The accepted English spelling for the instigator of the Mongol Empire is “Genghis Khan.” However, this thesis follows Humphrey’s spelling, “Chinggis Khaan,” which is closer to the Mongolian pronunciation (Humphrey, 1995).
In the centuries following the collapse of the Yuan dynasty, the Mongol khans in China were driven back to the Mongolian steppes by the Han Chinese, and the *khot ail*, which had formerly been the basis of the civil and military decimal system instituted by Chinggis Khaan, came to mean, instead, a group of families with common property and close familial ties (Bold, 1996, p. 72). During the socialist era in the twentieth century, the Mongolian People’s Party repeatedly confiscated privately owned livestock from the more wealthy to redistribute it to poorer families through nationalization and collectivization. Bold considers the impact of the changes during the socialist era evidence of the disintegration of the very foundation of cooperation between wealthy and poor families that had underpinned the old *khot ail* union. This changed the traditional relationship between nomads and animals, which no longer belonged to *ger ail*, “the family of the *ger*,” but to the larger socialist *negdel* structure (Bold, 1996, p. 73; Fijn, 2011, p. 55).

Sneath interprets that the collectivist approach had adapted the Mongol nomadic notions of an ordered hierarchical society rather than attempt to dramatically change it, unlike the current day “age of the market” and democratic notions imported from the hegemonic neo-liberal traditions of the West (Sneath, 2002, p. 204). With the collapse of communism, the Mongol nomadic pastoralists found it impossible to fit the needs of their pastoral methods to the internationally understood code of supply and demand and returned to the basic grouping unit of the past nomadic societal structure, the *khot ail*, the “far flung networks of families” and “transformed official institutions” (Humphrey & Sneath, 1999, p. 15; Sneath, 2002, p. 204). Today, *khot ail* and close kin are perceived by Mongolians living in the countryside as their most important close community (Lindskog, 2010, p. 65). There are also examples of the application of the *khot ail* concept to contexts other than
nomadic pastoralism. During the early years of democracy in the 1990s, several “children’s workers,” who were amongst those trained by the Save the Children Fund in social work practices, were inspired to establish and run Save the Children’s khot ail shelters to cope with the phenomenon of street children during the economic collapse following the ending of the socialist era (Save the Children UK, 2009, p. 34).

The People of the Felt-Walled Tents

Chinggis Khaan understood two important features of nomadic identity when he named the people of the elevated steppes of Inner Asia the “People of the Felt-Walled Tents”. 27 Firstly, such identification distinguished the difference between the nomadic way of life and settled ways of life of their southern Chinese neighbours. Secondly, the ger concept is a shared cultural feature of nomadic peoples in Inner Asia that calls to mind the close family bond formed around the sacred fire at its centre. Within the felt walls of the ger the nature of being human is understood in clear terms, and it emphatically reinforces the foundation for an ordered and continuing society as a particular Mongol nomadic one. The felt walls provided protection not only for human beings during the extreme winters but also for the nomadic way of life on the steppe.

27 Temuujin, who was to be named Chinggis Khaan in 1206, called the people he was gathering under his leadership the “People of the Felt Walls,” or the “People of the Felt-Walled Tents” (Bedeski, 2008, p. 94; Kaplonski, 1998, p. 40; J. Weatherford, 2004, pp. 53-54).
The steppe nomads have two distinct roles: the outward-focused management of the animals and links to wider society, and the inward-focused maintenance of close relationships around the hearth. The inward focus includes the relationships around the hearth within the *ger*, maintaining friendly and warm relations between each person in the customary way, a responsibility considered to be as important as managing the herd (Bruun, 2006, p. 109). Life in and around the *ger* involves keeping the fire alive and cooking pots busy, milking the animals, caring for the young and sick animals, and preparing and processing animal products such as felting and making clothes—tasks that are close to the *ger* where children are educated in customary ways of understanding and acting (Bruun, 1996, p. 70; Lindskog, 2000, p. 44; T. May, 2009, p. 128). The outward focus is the public affairs dimension of nomadic life, which, in historical times, included the obligation of going to war, and also the responsibility for planning and organizing the overall management and trading of animals and produce, the care of the horses, hunting and looking after animals in distant pastures. Heavier work, such as the construction and repair of the *ger* and animal enclosures, the slaughtering of animals, and the cutting of hay were also included. In reality, these chores are not daily chores and some require being away from the *ger* for extended periods (Bold, 2013, p. 126; Bruun, 1996, p. 69; Lindskog, 2000, p. 44). These roles might be seen through Western eyes as particularly gender-oriented, yet this is not always the outcome in the harsh and arid climate of the steppes. The male and female dynamic is not synonymous with the inward and outward dynamic, yet both of these dynamics are at play in the functioning of the *ger*. 
The strength of the union of husband and wife is represented in the ger universe by the two poles that hold up the wooden ring at the centre of the ger (Fijn, 2011, p. 61; Lindskog, 2000, p. 124). The ger is the inheritance of sons from their father, and daughters marry into the ger of their husbands in a tradition of exogamy (Humphrey & Sneath, 1999, p. 27; Lindskog, 2000, p. 68; Wikipedia, 2014a, p. 1). The word for marriage, gerlekh, means to establish a home, which, according to Lindskog, begins with the groom’s contribution of the spatial structures of the ger, and the bride contributing the kitchen furniture and utensils, and bedding for the ger (Lindskog, 2000, p. 68).

**Nomadic Women in Leadership Roles**

A woman’s leadership role is typically focused on the inward-focused maintenance of close relationships around the hearth, through which she becomes greatly loved. Steppe life offers many opportunities for her to be involved in most of the outward focused tasks (Lindskog, 2000, p. 45). Women often have to perform what might typically be construed as men’s tasks in other cultures, including packing the parts of the ger and setting up in a new location, while men may be searching for lost animals, or, as happened in the past, out to war (Bold, 2013, pp. 126-127; Bruun, 1996, pp. 70-71). Women are not subordinate to men and an egalitarian dimension is expressed in the sharing and balancing of the inward-focused and outward-focused roles.

Mongolian terminology refers to femaleness as “flesh,” while the male line of descent is referred to as “bone,” one without the other does not make life possible (Humphrey & Sneath, 1999, p. 26). Women are traditionally involved in decision-making and are the authority of the home encampment when men are called away.
This is reflected even at the level of the empire when Mongol queens were entrusted with managing the home realm while their khan husbands were busy with their conquests elsewhere (J. Weatherford, 2004, p. 160). Chinggis Khaan, the greatest of all the nomadic khans, listened to the opposing ideas of his wife and mother, even in public (J. Weatherford, 2000, p. B10). Oral traditions in nomadic folklore, such as the “Famous Grandmother,” indicate that the first shamans, the modern English name for the earliest spiritual advisors of the nomads, were women (Purev & Purvee, 2010, p. 21). Even during the Manchu era of rule over Mongolia from 1680 to 1911, women experienced higher levels of equality with men than in more recent times, according to Skapa and Fenger Benwell (Skapa & Fenger Benwell, 1996, p. 136). Women are greatly revered as exemplified in music, both traditional and contemporary, which reflects the great love for mothers and grandmothers who provide care, warmth and love, second to the love of the rolling grasslands and the eternal blue sky of the steppe (Lindskog, 2000, p. 62). A Mongolian idiom, “pure as mother’s milk” is used to express real purity, and though milk of all kinds is used in purifying offerings, it is never mother’s milk for it cannot be allowed to fall on the ground. Women relate to each other along the axes that balance position and movement in the ger. Daughters take the south-east space of the ger, and daughters-in-law do the same when visiting their mother-in-law. A woman may be daughter-in-law in her husband’s mother’s ger, but she is wife and mother-in-law in her own ger (Lindskog, 2000, pp. 218-219, 226).

Nomadic Men in Leadership Roles

Men often assume responsibility for the outward-focused roles in nomadic ger life. While men do become involved in many of the daily chores close to the ger,
including the education of children, irrespective of their possible designation as women’s tasks, the overriding identity of men is that of guardian and protector of the wealth of the family, though both women and men are contributors to the wealth of the family. Sneath asserts that the notion of authority, called ezen, which means “master,” is central to the nomadic understandings of order in both the social and spiritual worlds, and that being without it, being masterless, is a state of anarchy (Sneath, 2009, p. 170). The term geriin ezen, which in Sneath’s interpretation of ezen would mean master of the ger, is translated as “the backbone of the ger” for Mongolians, giving a different slant to the idea of mastery than English-speaking notions of power.

Fijn observes a deep understanding of the way animals behave naturally in a herd amongst nomads, and that this phenotype feature of animals is incorporated in the “ecosocial sphere” of the encampment (Fijn, 2011, p. 55). Nomadic pastoral methods work in unison with the natural order and functioning of the herd and are a feature in the material embodiment of nomadic peoples in Inner Asia. Interpreting order in society is strongly embedded in nomadic pastoral life. For example, the lead stallion is understood to take on a similar role to the herder as the manager that directs and protects the herd, while the lead mare is at the front of the herd seeking fresh grass or water (Fijn, 2011, p. 66).

In the thirteenth century, during the Mongol Empire, there were 100 coordinated polities with an allocated homeland, or nutag, each with an ezen responsible for assigning and regulating resources to the many khot ail within, each ezen for the khot ail knowing the pastoral needs of their animals, the economic needs of their people and their military capacity. The ezen were answerable up the chain of command to Chinggis Khaan and responsible to him for the cultural, economic,
political and military aspects of steppe life within their administrative-military
domain (Sneath, 2002, p. 197). Khot ail, since at least the seventeenth century, have
always had a leading family, one that is more wealthy and whose head has more
experience, and influence, and the quality of a birthright to this leadership (Bold,
1996, p. 82; Saunders, 2001, p. 12). Junior family members join in a khot ail
relationship, both social and economic at its base, providing respect, obedience and
labour in return for advice, good connections and economic protection from the
leading family (Humphrey & Sneath, 1999, p. 141). Impoverished families, whether
related or not, can also draw on previous links with a wealthy family and exchange
labour for the security of connection within the khot ail (Bold, 1996, p. 79). Khot ail
relies on its ezen to effectively coordinate economic concerns and the improvement
of livestock pedigree, maintaining relations within the khot ail and ensuring
obligations are met between family members, whether rich or poor.

The demographic equilibrium of khot ail accommodates the distribution of
labour and ensures survival of any family across the steppe. Khot ail uses traditional
ethical norms to regulate and sustain the nomadic way of life and has had a long
tradition of political significance that has, in the past, regulated military,
administrative, territorial and economic concerns for the Inner Asian nomads (Bold,
1996, p. 76). Humphrey observes the leadership landscape in nomadic culture as a
centre and power that moves. Just as the column of smoke is the physical link
between earth and sky that is established anew at each setting of the ger, so too is the
power of leadership in the household in the microcosm of the ger (Humphrey, 1995,
p. 142). The symbolism of the ger maintains the coherence of the claim to leadership
of the inheritor of the ger.
Trade and Warfare in Nomadic Economy

The pastoral lifestyle of nomadic grouping structures sustained a simple economy on the semi-arid steppe grasslands. From early history, the increase of wealth on the steppe required the capacity to either trade or to engage in warfare. To gain an advantage in trade in the simple economy that existed between the earlier nomadic groups meant to be in competition for the best grazing lands. To procure such luxuries as manufactured goods, that only a settled lifestyle could invest in producing, meant resorting to frequent raiding and warfare with the settled farmers and city-dwellers of China (Saunders, 2001, p. 11). Warfare also became a tactic for extorting lucrative peace treaties from their wealthy neighbours. The earliest record of such a ruse being employed was during the Hunnu Empire, which sustained its power and wealth for more than two centuries until the Han Dynasty in China collapsed early in the third century (Barfield, 2001, p. 28).

The herding and hunting activities of men in nomadic daily life provided the training grounds for raiding and warfare, as did their frequent internal skirmishes resulting from acrimonious relationships between related khans. Nomadic mobility also provided a very useful military strategy for escape when their Chinese adversaries had the upper hand in the war and survival meant relocating to set up camp and recover in a far flung and safer grazing area in the north of the steppes (Baabar, 2004, pp. 8-9; Barfield, 2001, p. 17). The dual potential for nomadic groupings to serve both subsistence and military purposes evolved into the decimal societal structure with the basic khot ail (Bold, 2013, p. 158). According to Morgan, building a nation and building an army were one and the same thing for nomadic society (Morgan, 1990, p. 74). Supported and mobilized by the khot ail, each Mongol warrior was fitted out and had as many as five mares to take into the battlefield, thus
ensuring a fresh mount and a source of nourishment when travelling vast distances, and their ability to hold off battle fatigue (Bold, 2013, p. 158; Morgan, 1990, p. 76). Nomadic warrior-herders, who supplemented their mare’s milk with mare’s blood as they travelled vast distances, had also honed their horsemanship and formidable archery skills over millennia (Bedeski, 2008, p. 90). This military skill was so formidable that Maodon, the first Shanyu—both shaman and ruler of the Hunnu Empire—identified his people as “Those Who Draw the Bow” (Honeychurch, 2012, p. 44; Purev & Purvee, 2010, p. 31). Great numbers of nomads were united again under Chinggis Khaan, who harnessed and organised these diverse nomadic groups to become a lethally mobile and superior military force that erupted out of the heart of the Eurasian continent, massacring thousands upon thousands to establish the “largest contiguous land empire ever” (Kaplonski, 2004, p. 1; Turnbull, 2003, p. 76).

**Nomadic Leadership Lineage**

The conceptualization of leadership on the steppes of Inner Asia suggests the existence of a defined class structure. As wealth flowed to each nomadic family from their leaders—who commanded and strategized in war, raids and negotiated peace treaties—so obligations were expected from them, including payment of taxes, providing war-ready warriors and submission to trading arrangements and to land allocations for grazing (Sneath, 2009, p. 152). Those in submission were never part of the family lineages that made up the steppe aristocratic class. They could never rise to the position of khan, remaining locked in a servitude relationship to the nobility clan either as personal servants or those who owed legal obligations to their ezen. Some were slaves who were owned, sold and given away; a practice the ruling Manchus from China felt compelled to prohibit during the nineteenth century.
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(Sneath, 2009, p. 168). Ordinary Mongolians can remember back to their great grandfather, have words in their language for patrilineal kin going back five generations, and refer to kinship relationships on the mother’s side to the level of second cousin (Humphrey & Sneath, 1999, p. 26; Lindskog, 2000, p. 196). In the past, the practice of exogamy was very strong as noted in nomadic leadership genealogy records. Extended families could easily be residentially scattered, and precise genealogical ties not known (Humphrey & Sneath, 1999, p. 27).

The male line of descent determining the leadership lineage are referred to as “white bone,” whereas those of the subject, common class are referred to as “black bone” (Sneath, 2009, p. 157). The nobility of nomadic society were the society class from which leaders were chosen. To belong to the nobility class meant to belong to the leadership lineage of the particular nomadic polity. Despite such strong family relationships amongst the nomadic royalty, there was little unity between the heirs of even the longest-running nomadic leadership family. Leaders made political alliances with each other and would also engage in bitter warfare whether they were closely related or not. Chinggis Khaan was born into a steppe “divided between a number of political entities,” each comprised of “aristocracies with common subjects” (Sneath, 2009, p. 157). Each ruling house, the family of the leadership lineage, had a patriarchal relationship with the nomadic polity population, though they were unrelated to the subjects under their care and patronage. Chinggis Khaan’s strategic political and military success resulted in each of these competing ruling houses submitting to him. Those who were vehemently opposed found their lineage decimated, while those who pledged allegiance were perhaps given lesser leadership roles, and all of the subjects of these previous polities became subjects of the growing Mongol Empire under Chinggis Khaan (Sneath, 2009, p. 157).
Ancient totemistic beliefs regarding the divine origin of a leading clan were the basis upon which the ruling families maintained their continuing leadership power. Chinggis Khaan was born into the aristocratic Borjigin clan. His origins, as stated in the beginning of *The Secret History of the Mongols*, a Mongol chronicle from the thirteenth century, were that of an ancestral bluish wolf whose mother had been visited by a bright yellow man, interpreted as a celestial being, coming through the gateway at the top of her *ger* (Sh. Bira, 2004, p. 3). Chinggis Khaan established his own lineage, known in history as the Chinggisid lineage, through which the nomadic lineage was continued and sustained as a principle of power that ensured his direct male descendants remained as the backbone of the Mongol Uls (Sneath, 2009, p. 172). Known also as the Golden Clan, the Chinggisid lineage bears the Borjigin name, their lesser princes are called “khan,” and the supreme leader is distinguished by the “khaan” or “khagan” title (Humphrey, 1995, p. 139; Sh. Bira, 2004, p. 3). This clan became the most renowned lineage in steppe history, and its most illustrious son, Chinggis Khaan, was extremely successful in eradicating possible contenders, even within his own family (Humphrey & Sneath, 1999, p. 27). English historical records refer to the Mongol Empire as lasting some 150 years, giving its date of origin as 1206 when Temuujin was elected and named Chinggis Khaan in a Great Khural of the many nomadic polities that had already individually pledged their allegiance to him through either fear or loyalty (Bedeski, 2008, p. 94). Chinggis Khaan replaced the old divided nomadic polities and former khans with a new structure, one that reorganized the whole of steppe society within an expanded traditional decimal system with new loyal and competent leaders chosen personally.

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28 The Great Khural during the Mongol Empire was a gathering of the senior leadership from across the realm to elect the next Great Khan from the Chinggisid lineage. Today it is a term used for the Mongolian parliament (Bedeski, 2008, p. 94).
by him. For the gift of leadership power these new steppe and military commanders were expected to give absolute loyalty to Chinggis Khaan, and, to ensure this, he took their sons into his own elite bodyguard. He required the bond of personal loyalty even at the reformatted *khot ail* level (Bedeski, 2008, p. 94; Lane, 2006, p. 15).

**Chinggis Khaan and the Mongol Uls**

Chinggis Khaan, however, created more than an empire, as explosive as this phenomenon was for twelfth century Eurasia. He established the Mongol Uls, as Mongolians understand it. Rather than empire or state, the term “uls,” according to Sneath, is more appropriately translated as polity, realm or patrimony (Sneath, 2009, p. 157). The Mongol chroniclers kept a close record of the Chinggisid lineage, an act that Lhamsuren considers to have contributed to the perpetuation of the Mongol Uls as the symbol of its unity and even the “stem” that brought all Mongols together (Lhamsuren, 2006, p. 51). Kaplonski notes that the greatness of the Chinggisid leaders has been predicated on their contribution to, first, the creation and, then, the preservation of the Mongol Uls. Chinggis Khaan created it, his son Ogedai Khaan caused it to reach its greatest spread, and his grandson Khubilai Khaan brought a united China under its umbrella. After the Ming dynasty took over control of China from the hands of the already acrimonious Mongol khans, Kaplonski identifies Zanabazar as a significant Mongol khan, though he surrendered to the Manchu Qing who were by then the rulers of China and would be the last Chinese dynasty. To the west of the old Mongol Empire’s centre, and once a part of the Mongol Uls, were the Oird, now with their own leadership lineage and a significant threat to the Chinggisid lineage and the core of the Mongol Uls. Zanabazar’s actions meant the Oird were
conquered by the Manchu Qing and the Mongol Uls could remain (Kaplonski, 2004, p. 121). The Manchu dynasty respected the structure of Chinggisid leadership throughout their rule over the Mongol Uls, though they were extremely careful to ensure the Mongol khans continued their intense internal rivalry through favours extended to one or the other for subduing each other.

**The Purging of the Chinggisid Lineage**

During the collapse of the Qing Dynasty and before the socialist era of the twentieth century there were four *khan aimag*, “territories each with their own Chinggisid khan”. Chinggisid nobles owned large numbers of animals, as did the Buddhist monasteries that had been established by that time. The embedded nomadic ethos of patriarchal genealogy was still exclusively focused on Chinggis Khaan’s heirs (Humphrey & Sneath, 1999, p. 220; Lhamsuren, 2006, p. 52). The daily lives of the nomadic women and children had not changed, but the nomadic leadership structure had gradually weakened by the beginning of the twentieth century, and the culture of men had dramatically transformed from one of readiness for war to one of feasts and festivities (Baabar, 2004, p. 97; O’Gorman & Thompson, 2007, p. 36).

Under the Ming dynastic rule, the Mongol nomads were cut off from the rest of the world. The Mongol khans were becoming increasingly fearful that the Chinese policy for Chinese immigration would mean eventual extinction through assimilation and believed autonomy was now the only future for the survival of the Mongol Uls (Baabar, 2004, p. 100; Ewing, 1980, pp. 156-157).

However, it was not a Chinggisid khan whose heroism has been credited with the “de facto” independence of Mongolia from China in 1921. Young soldiers from the new Mongol army, established soon after 1911 and trained by military advisors
from Russia, were sent in a delegation to the Soviet Red Army with a letter from the Mongol lama khan, the eighth Bogd Khan, requesting aid to repel both the Chinese and the old Russian White Army. Two of these soldiers became well known: Choibalsan as Mongolia’s Stalin, and Sukhbaatar, who was interpreted in the socialist narrative by Choibalsan as the founding father for the new Mongolia. The retrospective historical re-interpretations of today give a different significance to Sukhbaatar, who had officially died from exhaustion after leading battles to win back settlements from the Chinese and the Russian White Army. Some rumours persist that he was poisoned and had no idea of the plans for the systematic purging of the Chinggisid lineage, the Khalkha nobility and lamas later carried out under orders from Choibalsan (Baabar, 2004, p. 296). Sukhbaatar came to be seen, instead, as the protector of the Mongol Uls from the threat of assimilation by the Chinese and yet another milestone in the Mongol nomadic historical narrative (Kaplonski, 2004, pp. 166-167). Although the Mongol Uls was preserved it was now without the living “stem” of the Chinggisid lineage (Baabar, 2004, p. 354; Kaplonski, 2004, p. 121).

**Mongol Nomadic Moral Horizons**

The Mongol nomadic moral horizons explored here are general in nature and draw from English sources on Mongolian culture and history. This is necessarily an interpretation by a non-Mongolian drawing on the limited literature available in English. However, the key features of that framework are laid out in the discussion that follows.

The Mongol nomadic ger provides the anchor for the understanding laid out in this section. The customs and rules, yos, are strongly reinforced in the being and
doing within the ger space, geriin yos. Yos contributes to the Mongol nomadic understanding of societal morality, a contribution of rules and norms set by temporal rulers, though it has deeper origins from a more distant and not so accessible past. It is balanced by the presence of surtakhuun, a personal ethics based on a relational construction of moral exemplarity, a practice that gives space to the individual’s own perspective and experience in conceptualizing morality. Yos and surtakhuun are placed as the opposite yet symbiotic poles that balance the dynamic of Mongol nomadic morality, acting on each other to recognize individual capacity for interpretation and society’s need for a unifying social code for its many ways of life and moral engagements in the Mongol nomadic context. The religious dimension of culture, seen through the lens of the historical journey, has contributed to both yos and surtakhuun, and these two dimensions of Mongolian morality have also influenced, and been influenced by, the understanding and practice of the different religions embraced by the nomadic steppe peoples. Herein, only the historically dominant religious influences are considered, and only with respect to the nature of their relationship with the yos and surtakhuun dynamic.

**Nomadic Rules and Customs: Yos**

The formalized rules, laws and customs of the Mongol nomads are termed yos. Mongolians define their “Mongolness” by enacting yos, which guides their behaviour and regulates their relationships. The spatial organization and orderly movement of people and objects within the ger manifests yos in visible and kinaesthetic ways. Yos is tied to the physical and spiritual structure of the ger, both affirming and being informed by notions of an earlier cosmology. It is yos that enables the positioning and movement of people and objects in the ger in relationship to each other.
according to the hierarchical values embedded in nomadic cosmology. The enactment of *yos* enables the value of equality to be set in a balancing opposition to such ranking and is graphically demonstrated in the *yos* surrounding the etiquette of hospitality when someone visits. Guests take their position according to occupation, achievements, age and gender in relation to each other and the host within the *ger*. The *yos* of hospitality is the mediation between host and guest, a safe space in which the intentionality of the visit can be navigated towards a friendly, and therefore balanced, relationship. Two aspects of *yos* enable both intention and balance to be communicated: the kind of food and drink, and the way it is served, is the equalizing power of *yos*; and the positioning of guest and host demonstrates the hierarchical power of *yos*.

There is also space for rules that are not so formalized, *zanshil*, which have to do with what feels correct. For those who do not understand the fullness of *yos*, and perhaps cannot reason all the intricate details, there are explicit taboos, *tseer*, to prevent someone’s lack of understanding from disturbing the natural order and balance of things (Lindskog, 2000, pp. 129-131, 146-151). A person skilful with *yos* has learned the reasoning behind these rules and understands the deep-seated patterns of the ideal underpinning them, which they consciously enact and express in the myriad of engagements with people and the entities of things. *Yos* can be likened to the grain of wood, a Mongolian explained to Humphrey. It can be cut in any way, but to cut it in the best way for a particular result requires understanding the grain and the intention of the woodcutter (Humphrey, 1997, p. 30). The enactment of *yos* sets the tone and becomes a mode for conveying meaning and adding a creative dimension to social engagements and relationships (Humphrey, 2012, p. S64; Lindskog, 2000, pp. 58-59). It is a discourse of intentions in the combination and
balance of correct and incorrect behaviours. There are opportunities for circumventing the obligations of enacting yos, such as being absent to avoid visitors when either there are too many social demands, being absent to avoid conflicts when time away is needed to achieve calm, or being absent to avoid unwanted scrutiny when privacy is compromised (Lindskog, 2010, pp. 77-78).

The ger is representative of the nomadic cosmos and therefore integral to learning, remembering and enacting yos. The ger itself is an inviting and warm space in contrast to the open and cold outside. Anyone passing a ger is always welcome to enter and receive the greetings prescribed by yos, though only after such greetings might a welcoming attitude, or otherwise, be revealed. A person’s sociability is measured by the hospitality and generosity they show within the ger, even in absence, values that are enshrined in yos by the many rules revolving around the etiquette of hospitality (Kaplonski, 1998, p. 20; Lindskog, 2010, p. 75; Purev & Purvee, 2010, pp. 27-28). According to Humphrey (2012), hospitality is inherently unstable as host and guest meet without any guarantee of a positive outcome, a vulnerability she sees mirrored in the isolated position of the ger and khot ail on the open steppe with only the protection of a fierce dog or two. The coordination of yos in the hospitality relationship is the traditional and generally accepted way of creating a tone of reassurance that allows friendly relations to continue within the ger (Humphrey, 2012, p. S73). Yos is not confined to hospitality, for example, there are rules for food, xoollox yos, nor is it confined to rules within the ger, for example, nüüdlin yos, which is an adaption of yos for the time of a seasonal migratory move (Lindskog, 2000, p. 130). Yos is also the traditional nomadic ethical framework for khot ail, its strong sense of community and social order being framed by yos. According to Bold, it represents a code for peaceful living based on helpfulness and
cooperation, reliability and responsibility, the sharing of knowledge and experience, the division and sharing of labour, and the regulation of animals and use of pasture, all the while respecting the “one hearth” identity of the “ecosocial sphere” of the ail ger, “family of the ger” (Bold, 2013, p. 133; Bruun, 2006, pp. 73, 94).

A Mongolian proverb underscores the cultural and social importance of khot ail: “Families living close together as khot ail have one life, and are neighbours with one mind,” written in Mongolian as “Khot ail’iin ami neg. Saakhalt ailiin sanaa neg” (N. Batsaikhan, personal communication, 19 October, 2010). Fijn, who recognized khot ail as an ecosocial sphere, also related it to the phrases “sentient ecology” and “ecology of selves” (Fijn, 2011, p. 58). Lindskog notes a link between yos and homeland, nutag, that to drink the water in a particular “nutag implies the behaviour will be in alignment with its particular yos” (Lindskog, 2000, p. 145). The yos surrounding hospitality is based on the basic social unit of the ail ger and the term for host, ezen, is the same for the head of the household. The term also is applied to leaders at all levels of Mongol nomadic society (Humphrey, 2012, p. S65). During the era of Manchu rule, the steppe lands were divided into hoshuu, similar to European fiefdoms or Chinese banners, also referred as to nutag by Mongolians. During the time of Manchu rule, the banner prince, a leader from the Chinggisid lineage, was called the nutugiin ezen, literally master of the homeland. They were also called zasag noyon, meaning lord of the patrimonial fief (Lindskog, 2010, p. 39). Temporal rulers and the rules of yos are strongly linked in a very long history that predates the Mongol Empire that involves the use of the term zasag, which means law. Many Mongolians today hold the old societal norms enshrined in yos in high regard and believe they are the remnants of the Ikh Zasag, the Great Law of Chinggis Khaan and the Mongol Empire (Wang, 2000, p. 9). The Ikh Zasag is
considered by a Persian scholar to be the law that Chinggis Khaan had recorded and added to in his lifetime in order to preserve the nomadic traditions of good management of family and society that all People of the Felt-Walled Tents valued (Alavijeh, 2013, p. 15).

Morality for many Mongolians today, rural or urban, involves *yos*, which is the embedded and consciously shared notions in Mongol nomadic culture and history of correct behaviour that are necessary to sustain and maintain moral equilibrium in relationships between people, and between people and things. The underpinning beliefs and assumptions draw on an ancient cosmological understanding of hierarchically ordered social relations, the inner logic and regularity between people and things. Identity within a community is constructed through the hierarchical and gendered positioning rules of *yos* within the *ger*, and identity with a community is also clarified by the *yos* connected to the water that is drunk in the *nutag*. The understanding and enactment of *yos*, more importantly, is a moral discourse that involves interpretation and practice (Lindskog, 2000, pp. 59, 128, 147, 149). The enactment of *yos* opens possibilities for moral balance, for moral peace and order in society. *Yos* is, however, only one side of morality in the Mongol nomadic view. According to Humphrey (Humphrey, 1997) there is another side, *surtakhuu*, a phenomenon of personal ethics based on moral exemplars.

**Nomadic Moral Exemplarity: Surtakhuu**

*Surtakhuu* refers to the moral domain within the individual that acknowledges the capacity of interpretation involving reason and the creation of meaning, and the capacity to make independent moral choices. It is a recognition of the diversity between individuals and the different moral constructs needed to live a life in the
particular context with the particular purposes, talents, opportunities and interests a person may have. \textit{Surtakhuun} is the moral wisdom, or ethical understandings, an individual can draw from \textit{ulger}, “the combination of the ideal represented by the teacher and his/her words or deeds” (Humphrey, 1997, p. 37)—a quite different source from the understanding and practice of \textit{yos}. The moral power of the individual and the moral requisite for order in society and nature are both needed for the establishment and maintenance of moral balance in the context of the cosmological assumptions underpinning Mongol nomadic cultural perceptions of the universe.

Viewing morality from this perspective, \textit{surtakhuun} is set in counterpoint to \textit{yos}, each tempering the other, providing an avenue for the power of equality to be in tension with hierarchy (Humphrey, 1997, pp. 32, 34). \textit{Surtakhuun} enables a sense of enhancement of moral being for the self, according to Kaplonski, in ways that \textit{yos} is unable to provide (Humphrey, 1997, p. 44). The Mongol nomadic approach to resolving the potential for contention and acrimonious rivalry in difference is to acknowledge, through \textit{surtakhuun}, that there are a variety of possible ways of living life open to an individual (Humphrey, 1997, p. 34). Mongol morality places a greater emphasis on the “practices of the self” to cultivate the self than on merely following rules. The pathway for developing the self, Humphrey notes, is the discourse of moral exemplarity, \textit{ulger}, being the moral focus from which a personal ethics results (Humphrey, 1997, p. 43). The moral power of the individual (\textit{surtakhuun}) and the moral requisite for order in society and nature (\textit{yos}) can be seen as the dynamic that achieves the establishment and maintenance of moral balance between a person and society.

The responsibility for moral development, then, rests on the individual (Humphrey, 1997, pp. 32-33). This responsibility begins with the independent search
for *surgaal*, the words and acts of someone older who has perfected some quality or moral principle, such as bravery, purity of thought or compassion, for example, that has become relevant to the individual’s goal of living a more worthy life and therefore has exemplarity qualities (Humphrey, 1997, p. 34; Lindskog, 2000, p. 148). It is imperative that a choice be made, for to be without *ulger* is to be a “nobody,” and such choices involve the individual in an open-ended moral dialogue of deep contemplation and conversation regarding the understandings and learning from *ulger* (Humphrey, 1997, pp. 34-35). A lifelong teacher, *bagshi*, and student, *shavi*,29 relationship forms around the *ulger*, a relationship defined by the discourse entailed in transforming *surgaal* into *ulger* for the *shavi*. The *bagshi* may be an historical person, such as Chinggis Khaan, or perhaps a contemporary poet, lama or shaman, and the *shavi* may have more than one *bagshi* (Lindskog, 2000, p. 148).

In the engagement with his or her chosen *bagshi*, the *shavi* is self-directive in the goal of self-improvement. According to Humphrey, this kind of discourse tends to be “highly wrought, focused and difficult to understand,” with perhaps multiple meanings only available when applied to the specific intentions of the *shavi* in the multiple particular predicaments for which moral solutions are sought in order to achieve a worthy life (Humphrey, 1997, p. 41). *Ulger*, therefore, can be quite complex and difficult to understand, requiring considerable effort on the part of the *shavi* to gain moral wisdom, involving continual practice and reflection about *ulger* in the many and varied experiences and challenges of living a life (Humphrey, 1997, p. 41).

29 The terms *bagshi* and *shavi* were used by Humphrey to explain the relationship between the exemplar and the one interpreting exemplarity. These terms are possibly an introduction into the Mongolian language from Buddhism (J. Weatherford, personal communication, 7 April, 2014). See Chapter Eight for a proposed interpretation of the reinterpretations of *surtakhuun* in different historical eras.
Many modern Mongolians refer to the examples of Chinggis Khaan’s life recounted in *The Secret History of the Mongols*, a previously forbidden text under socialism that is now readily available (Humphrey, 1997, p. 41). The *bagshi–shavi* educative discourse is one of many kinds of dialogues that a person has, and by its very nature it opens up an essential moral space, one that is avowedly relational, for making sense of the beliefs, ideas and ways of others, the myriad *surgaal* and the *yos* of society, in order to live a life that makes sense and is worthy to the individual and to society (Humphrey, 1997, pp. 25, 41). The *bagshi–shavi* relationship is interpreted as a hierarchical one in which the *bagshi* is higher, though it is in reflective interpretation and practice that moral wisdom is created and elucidated by the *shavi*. The *shavi* honours the *ulger* that is drawn from the *bagshi* and their *surgaal*. The position of *ulger* in the *ger* is on the *khoimor*, the most honoured place in the *ger*. If the *bagshi* were the visitor, their position would be the most honoured place in the north-west of the *ger* (Humphrey, 1997, pp. 36-37; Kaplonski, 2004, p. 120; Lindskog, 2000, p. 148). The *bagshi* may not be aware of the worthiness of their *surgaal*, sayings and deeds, which an attentive *shavi* has transformed into *ulger* by contextualizing the *surgaal* of the *bagshi* as worthy in ethical decisions and moral responses. This Humphrey considers being “evidence for a sense of self as a fundamental form of thought and action” (Humphrey, 1997, p. 38).

The moral power of the individual, *surtakhuun*, and the moral requisite for order in society and nature, *yos*, can be seen as the dynamic that achieves the establishment and maintenance of moral balance within a person and a society.
Modern Morality: Yos Surtakhun

The translation of the English term “morality” into Mongolian is yos surtakhun, which condenses the Mongolian meaning in its historical and cultural context to be more in alignment with English-speaking conceptions of morality. This has become the more frequent term in Mongolian today, yet the terms yos and surtakhun are understood more fully when treated as separate Mongolian words that require more informed translations into English. Moral development in the Mongolian cultural context is facilitated through yos, the accepted right or correct behaviour for sociability amongst gendered and hierarchized persons, and surtakhun, the individual’s ethical framework constructed through the thoughtful emulation of the exemplary qualities of admired others (Humphrey, 1997, pp. 25, 32; Lindskog, 2000, pp. 148-149). Humphrey (1997) relates yos to the right “way things should be,” and surtakhun the ethical “way I should be,” and she identifies a third moral aspect relating to the arbitrary “way things are,” that of heartfelt respect for one’s senior kin, which, unlike yos and surtakhun, is not as open to dialogical exchange. An avenue did exist to appeal to higher authorities regarding this aspect of morality, as eighteenth and nineteenth century records show; petitions were made by the subjects to higher ezen regarding the intolerable activities of lower ezen in the hopes that yos would be correctly applied (Humphrey, 1997, p. 30). The moral imperative of respect, for Mongolians, then, means accepting the rulings given by the household ezen and more so the temporal leaders higher up in this hierarchy (Humphrey, 1997, p. 32). Despite the power of temporal and celestial leadership, yos and surtakhun empowers the individual to live a worthy life in the eyes of self and society, one that can be different and of a person’s own making, and still admirable.
Shamans

There is yet another moral dimension to the Mongol nomadic culture within which shamans play a crucial role, that of religion. Shamans are an inextricable aspect of steppe culture, tied to the nomadic cosmology just as the leadership lineage is. Shamanism is a term used today to refer generally to the many practices of shamans and those who engage with them. It is perhaps an old traditional religion without the sophisticated leadership structures of more recent religions. Whatever it might be, it is the spiritual outlook that is the most deeply embedded in Mongol nomadic culture, perhaps for as long as pastoral nomadism has been a way of life on the steppes of Inner Asia. Up until the sixteenth century it was also the most dominant spiritual approach, though the more organized religions, such as Buddhism, Nestorian Christianity and Manichaeism, Confucianism and Islam had followers and were influential in some way up until this period.

Shamans draw on the cosmological understandings embedded in the ger and yos, with the source of interpretation for the source of life, both physical and spiritual, being the blue sky and nature (Bold, 2013, p. 268). Shamans act as intermediaries between people and the spiritual forces in the cosmos in a quest for finding balance and achieving purpose. Nature is a mother entity in relationship with the sky, a father entity, and between them are lesser spirit entities attached to various features of the cosmos known as masters of the land, gazariin ezen. An example of spirit ezen are those attached to the running tracks between male-based groupings, as khot ail and nutag are, that signify the movement of women between them in the practice of exogamy, which are often associated with women’s experiences of abandonment, and a power or force that needs offerings of appeasement (Humphrey, 1995, p. 151). Offerings are made to these spirit entities, also seen as stewards of the
land. One example being rituals around the *ovoo*, or traditional stone cairns, which are present at various locations on the landscape; another might be the first milk offerings each morning outside the *ger*. Worship, in the shamanic context, is a form of bargaining, a kind of exchange, and is mirrored in the deferential treatment given to people in power through the centuries with gifts to ply their favour (Humphrey, 1995, pp. 137, 139, 149; Sneath, 2002, pp. 199-200).

Sarangerel claims, perhaps somewhat idealistically, that modern shamans seek to heal and restore balance between people and their environment and do this through the relationship they have with the spirit world, and that indeed their shamanic calling is itself guided by the spirits (Sarangerel, 2001). This is not always the case, as many unemployed men in the city may seek a commercial identity in practising shamanism, or middle-class women envision themselves as princesses of the past, with their practice relying on ritualistic activities rather than in any particular belief or ideology (Prof. J. Weatherford, personal communication, 7 April, 2014).

Shamanism, according to Humphrey, is a discourse of multiple practices adapted through the centuries in response to the different configurations of power: as the central political and religious power during the Hunnu Empire; in the employ of political power as some kind of wise man during the Mongol Empire; marginalized to private relationships with individuals and families while Lamaism replaced it in the political realm during the Manchu era; underground during socialism; and popular as a shaman-client relationship during the current transition era (Humphrey, 1996, p. 194).
**Tenggerism**

By the time of the Mongol Empire, there were two overlapping socio-spiritual landscapes with their own sense of place and spatial awareness, both drawing from the same cosmological understanding, and both engaging with their landscapes on behalf of nomadic social groups. Through the complexities of political, economic and religious nomadic interrelationships there evolved the patrimonial lineage of temporal power, with shamans holding onto a certain kind of celestial power as spirit-chosen women or men not of the patrimonial line (Humphrey, 1995, pp. 135-137, 159).

There existed a tension between the different power domains of the leadership lineage and the shamans, presenting a characteristic duality of opposing positions. The leadership lineage embodied in the Borjigin clan had the power over society, and the shamans embraced the world of intimate discourse between the spirit world and the individual (Humphrey, 1995, p. 138). The nomadic leader with the greatest power over the largest nomadic society was Chinggis Khaan, born with the right to patrimonial leadership and with a claimed inheritance to a divine connection with the Eternal Heaven, *Munkh Tenggeri*. He and his inheritors believed the Borjigin lineage had the eternal divine mission and blessing to rule over all that lived under the expansive Blue Heaven, *Khukh Tenggeri*, uniting all in their capacity as sons and messengers of the heavenly sky (Purev & Purvee, 2010, p. 98; Sh. Bira, 2004, p. 5). This claim was given substance due to the apparent divine birthright conferred by the visit of the celestial being to the maternal ancestor of the Borjigin lineage. The Mongol Uls was thus brought together and its preservation became a foundational purpose to the “Tenggerisation” of the world, a term Sh. Bira, a Mongolian scholar, creates to encapsulate what he calls the celestial uniting of the world, a globalizing
movement similar, and yet opposite, to today’s “terrestrial” globalization (Nichols, 2011, p. 177; Sh. Bira, 2004, p. 9).

The idea later became defined as Tenggerism as a way of explaining the historical phenomenon that brought into its conceptualizations the relationship between the khaan and *Munkh Tenggeri* ideas from Christian, Islamic, Buddhist and Taoist religious understandings. An example of Christian influence shows in a letter from Guyuk Khaan\(^30\) (1246-1248) to Pope Innocent IV declaring, “This is the order of the everlasting God, *Munkh Tenggeri*. In heaven, there is only one eternal God; on earth there is only one lord, Chinggis Khaan. This is the word of the son of God, which is addressed to you” (Sh. Bira, 2004, p. 6). Chinggis Khaan’s religious views could be interpreted as tolerant from today’s perspective of history when compared to the views of his contemporaries. Islam, Nestorian Christianity and Buddhism had already reached the pre-Mongol nomadic steppes and were part of what defined the differences between nomadic groups, even while shamans continued to be relied upon and were, in many areas, dominant (Morgan, 1990, p. 38).

Chinggis Khaan continued the traditional tolerance of religious belief, maintaining the essential unity of the People of the Felt-Walled Tents with their embeddedness in a nomadic culture (Baabar, 2004, p. 32; J. Weatherford, 2004, p. 69). Easily recognized as a political motivator, Sh. Bira claims that it was more than a world empire, or even Mongol Uls, the famous khaan was establishing; he was undertaking a global process of establishing peace while maintaining diversity (Sh.

\(^30\) It should be noted that the khaans probably wrote in terms understandable for their readers, recognizing the concept of *Munkh Tenggeri*, Eternal Heaven or Sky Father, related strongly with God in other religious traditions. *Etugen*, Earth Mother, was possibly an important pair concept with *Munkh Tenggeri* for Chinggis Khaan (Prof. J. Weatherford, personal communication, 7 April, 2014). There is a great deal of historical research to be done to retrieve the importance of *Etugen* in Mongol nomadic conceptions of morality, which is beyond the scope of this thesis.
Religious tolerance in the light of Tenggerism, the term used to refer to the conceptual understandings of the Mongol khaans, had hints of a doctrinal ideal combining all peoples and their religions as one people under the Blue Sky and Mongol leadership, yet it was more actively employed as a strategic diplomatic and foreign policy to prevent fracturing of the empire, and may even have been underpinned by perceptions that the prayers of the holy men of diverse religions also possessed intermediary power (Bold, 2013, p. 229; Jackson, 2005, p. 277). Tolerance for the practice of other religions was accompanied by the belief that nomadic understanding, particularly the Tenggerist interpretations of the khaans, was greater than, and above, the power of the other religions. John of Plano Carpini, during his visit to the Mongol khaan in the mid-thirteenth century, recorded that visiting foreign dignitaries were expected to venerate the image of Chinggis Khaan when coming into the presence of the incumbent Mongol khaan (Jackson, 2005, p. 260). Jackson also claims that the belief in the superiority of Tenggerism resulted in the Mongols attempting to abolish certain religious practices when they conflicted with customary steppe law (Jackson, 2005, p. 260).

**Lamaism**

The universal principles of Chinggis Khaan’s empire gradually faded as the Mongol royals in far-away lands progressively acculturated and assimilated into their various realms. As the Chinggisid rulers of China fled from the conquering Ming dynasty, they retreated to the steppe and gradually into what became the political safety of Buddhism (J. Weatherford, 2004, p. 248). Buddhism had a history of political connection to the leadership lineages since at least after the time of the Hunnu Empire, a pattern of advance and retreat in parallel with the emergence of
centralized states. The intertwining of Buddhist lamas with the Mongol leadership landscape transformed Buddhism into a particular Mongol adaptation known as Lamaism (Humphrey, 1995, p. 140).

The first Buddhist advance during the long running history of the Mongol Uls was during the Mongol Empire in the fourteenth century. Khubilai Khaan, the inaugurator of the Yuan Dynasty in China, had Buddhist advisors and returned Chinese Buddhist temples that had been previously seized by Taoists back to the Buddhist community (Wikipedia, 2014b). The second was by the Khalkha khans during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, one of whom, Altan Khan, made a strategic political move against the Mongol faction to the west, the Oirds, by naming the visiting top-ranking Tibetan Yellow Buddhist leader the Dalai Lama, precipitating the conversion of many Khalkha Mongols to Lamaism, including the Oirds who did not wish to face the Tibetan army (Baabar, 2004, pp. 70-71).

The third advance was in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries when one of the Khalkha khans, Zanabazar, is claimed to be recognized by the Dalai Lama as the reincarnation of a long-serving Tibetan lama who did much to spread Buddhism on the steppe, thereby establishing the Mongol’s own living Buddha and Buddhist leader, the Javzandamba Hutagt, serving as both its celestial and temporal leader (Kaplonski, 2004, pp. 2, 162). Zanabazar’s alliance with the Manchu rulers that put the Mongol Uls in a position of servitude, enabled the Oird threat to be subdued once

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31 After the Yuan Dynasty returned to the Mongolian steppe, the Mongol polity declined into poverty and disunity. In the early sixteenth century, the strong Dayan Khaan, a direct descendent of Khubilai Khaan, united the Mongol nomads and created the Khalkha states, Khalkha meaning “shield”. These became the Khalkha Mongols. His sons each ruled one of these states spread between Inner and Outer Mongolia. In this way the Mongol Uls was saved from the Oird threat to the west and continued, decentralized yet united (see http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Xalx, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dayan_Khan).

32 According to Weatherford it was the incumbent Manchu Emperor who recognized Zanabazar as the reincarnation of the Javzandamba Hutagt, and that he fought against the supporters of the Dalai Lama until 1696 (Jack Weatherford, 2014).
and for all, and also opened the door to Manchu overlordship and the Manchu Qing support of Tibetan Buddhism to serve their own political purpose of pacifying the age-old warmongering nomadic threat to their north. The Manchu Qing also undermined the power of the Bogd khan system by requiring reincarnations of the Javzandamba Hutgat to appear in Tibet, a situation that remained in place until the early twentieth century (Baabar, 2004, p. 95). The Buddhist lamas had a strong leadership structure and aligned themselves easily with the Chinggisid leadership lineage and the cosmological underpinning of nomadic understanding, establishing Mongolian Lamaism. Shamans, however, were spirit-chosen and derived their power from the spirit-world rather than any social structure, and they became increasingly marginalized as Lamaism strengthened its position (Humphrey, 1995, p. 151; Lindskog, 2010, p. 174).

Buddhist monasteries were built and laws adopted to displace shamen. Their authority in traditional practices such as mountain worship, were replaced by Buddhist lamas, rituals such as blood sacrifices were banned, and spirits came to be categorized as “good” and “bad” (Humphrey, 1995, pp. 140, 148). Just as Tibetan mythology had been incorporated into Yellow Buddhism, so too were the traditional stories supporting the Mongol nomadic cosmological understanding concerning heaven and spirits “improved, and adopted by Lamaism for the Ovoo” (Baabar, 2004, pp. 71, 98; Purev & Purvee, 2010, pp. 50, 56). The Khalkha Mongols became Lamaists, and, by the turn of the twentieth century, a legion of lamas, reaching over a quarter of the male population, occupied monasteries and were financially supported by the ever more burdened and impoverished Mongol nomads (Baabar, 2004, p. 99; Kaplonski, 2004, p. 177).
By the early twentieth century, each of the 800 monasteries were surrounded by a sea of Lamaist-focused ger, and their high-ranking lamas ruled over the Khlakha Mongol nomads alongside the Chinggisid aristocracy (Bruun & Odgaard, 1996, p. 36; O'Gorman & Thompson, 2007, p. 36). Changes to the ger were not structural, though just as Buddhism assimilated the nomadic cosmology, the ger assimilated Buddhist interpretations into the traditional representation of the cosmos within the ger. The wooden crown at the apex came to be fashioned as a representation of the Buddhist wheel of transformation (King, 2008, p. 32; Religion Facts, n.d., p. 1). The khoimor at the northern end of the ger hosted a small Buddhist shrine containing sutras wrapped in silk, and, before the advent of socialism, pictures of the Lama-Khan, the eighth reincarnation of the Javzandamba Hutagt, had also been placed on the khoimor (Bikales, 2001, pp. 86-87; T. May, 2009, p. 128). Lamas occupied the most honoured space in the ger, the space directly beside the khoimor on the western male side (Lindskog, 2000, pp. 115-116). Shamans found in lamas a bitter competition that threw their relationship with the temporal ezen of Mongol society off balance, causing them to recalibrate and adapt their role with the change in moral discourse. At times they retreated, taking a subordinate status, at times they fled, and at others accepted an uneasy amalgamation of beliefs (Humphrey, 1995, p. 140).

Lamaism introduced a moral shift into the traditional conceptions of morality. To the traditional discourse of yos in the practice and understanding of the ways of the ger and nomadic life was added the study and disputation of sacred texts in the Buddhist religious context (Humphrey, 1997, p. 30). The lama was added to the array of moral exemplars from which a Mongol could choose. Freedom was also given to the new young lama entering into the monastery, after an initial assignment to a
senior lama, to choose which senior lama he would follow, echoing the traditional idea of the bagshi–shavi relationship of surtakhuun. However, the formalization of surtakhuun in the Lamaist monastery appears to be in conflict with the long-standing nomadic tradition. Contrary to the nomadic tradition, the Lamaist tradition tends to be a one-sided discourse of purposive teachings from the lama to his disciples, the boys and young men in the monastery. No space is given to the shavi to transform the surgaal of his bagshi into ulger through his own interpretations made possible in dialogue and through his reflection of its practice in moral engagement (Humphrey, 1997, pp. 37, 45). Tenggeri is the moral source for the Mongol nomads, but there are no sacred texts attributed to this moral source. However, although the social values authored in the moral exemplarity discourse, such as justice and altruism, may be compared to the universalized moral values found in Buddhism and later in communism, they have not originated from a similar kind of source such as the sacred texts of Buddhism and other more recent world religions. Neither did they draw their origins from the political manifesto of a state ideology (Humphrey, 1997, p. 33). Alongside yos and surtakhuun, nomadic morality gradually came to embrace Buddhist teachings, including the pursuit of individual nirvana, or salvation (Humphrey, 1995, p. 140).

**Socialism**

During the era of Manchu rule, the Mongol nomads were cut off from the expanding industrial world and its wealthy empires because of China’s control over them and the conservative doctrine of Lamaism that abhorred progress and change. The Khalkha Mongol khans feared the new Chinese policies of Chinese transmigration, reorganization of administration, railroad construction and military
conscription, which they thought would bring their eventual extinction through assimilation. They believed independence was now the only option for the survival of the Mongol Uls (Baabar, 2004, p. 100; Ewing, 1980, pp. 156-157). During the last decades of the long running Qing dynasty, Russia was making its move into Mongol territory. Gradually Russia and China carved up the pastureland steppes that the nomadic Mongols and their ancestors had grazed for several millennia, signing treaties and exploiting opportunities to increase their own wealth and influence (J. Weatherford, 2004, pp. 264-265).

After the collapse of the Qing dynasty in China there were five *aimags* governing the Mongols. Four were provinces nominally headed by four Chinggisid khans, and the Tibetan Bogd Khan, as the temporal and ecclesiastical head, governed the fifth. These five *aimags* sought to establish independence for the Mongol Uls in 1911, though no significant support was forthcoming from anywhere outside of Russia and China (Baabar, 2004, pp. 102-103; Kaplonski, 1998, p. 38). While the rest of the world lumbered through two world wars and distracted Russia, the Mongols experienced their own internal terror and tumult as they were introduced into modernity. The Chinese became more intense in their efforts to annex Outer Mongolia in the same way it had annexed Inner Mongolia in the seventeenth century. The Soviet army ousted the Chinese in 1921 and the Mongolian People’s Republic, MPR, was proclaimed in 1924, though it was, in reality, a puppet state of the Soviet Union (Baabar, 2004, p. 318; Gilberg & Svantesson, 1996, p. 13).

The right-wing faction of the MPR was “neutralised” in party purges to weed out those who did not show obedience to Russia. Choibalsan soon rose to the leadership and the MPR came to be governed under instruction from Stalin (Baabar, 2004, p. 293). All foreigners were expelled, even the Germans and Danes who had
begun development initiatives at the invitation of the Mongols, and the Soviet Union became the exclusive destination of export goods from Mongolia (Baabar, 2004, pp. 299-300). Stalin’s campaigns of collectivization, industrialization and education swept through the Mongol peoples transforming them into Mongolians (Baabar, 2004, pp. 292, 301-302). The previously illiterate nomadic Mongols became exposed to the literature, theatre and music of Russian culture and were encouraged to develop the expressive arts as well as become engaged in new sports (Baabar, 2004, p. 303). Modernization blanketed the country and the repression of the Mongolian aristocracy, both feudal and religious, was initiated under the guise of technological advancement (Baabar, 2004, p. 292). Collectivization experiments began to disrupt the cultural nomadic way of life, turning their *khot ail* into a herding equivalent of Russian-style military camps, *negdel* (Baabar, 2004, p. 295). Women, traditionally the backbone of nomadic life that sustained family life, were swept up in the socialist feminist movement that disrupted family relationships with a consequent shifting away from the traditional pattern of living as a nomadic woman brought into her husband’s *ger* (Baabar, 2004, pp. 308-309). A bloody civil war ensued as leaders and lamas, and many ordinary folk, realized they had traded one form of oppression for another and were now engaged in a brutal struggle with the revolutionaries (Baabar, 2004, p. 315).

In 1932 Stalin finally paid close attention to Mongolia and initiated a reform for economic freedom through Choibalsan, though this was a ruse as preparation was underway for the great purge (Baabar, 2004, p. 324). A meticulous and unprecedented study was commissioned by the Mongolian leadership, at the direction of Stalin, of the monasteries, temples, lamas and their territorial movements, and of the genealogy of the Chinggisid aristocracy (Baabar, 2004, p.
This was the basis for the greater and more thorough purge than the one experienced during the earlier communist hysteria years. The network of lamas and monasteries in Mongolia were systematically decimated and any trace of the direct male descendants of Chinggis Khaan was completely eradicated. It is estimated that some 30,000 people died, about five percent of the Mongol population at the time, either through being consigned to gulags in Siberia, being shot and buried in unmarked graves, or simply disappearing, and for this success Choibalsan was rewarded with the Order of Lenin (Baabar, 2004, pp. 354, 369; J. Weatherford, 2004, p. 264). A fatalistic acceptance of the harshness of the new regime’s ways overtook the nomads, accustomed as they were to their hard climate and way of life and the need to persevere in order to preserve their own existence (Baabar, 2004, p. 381).

Stalin’s socialist revolution for Mongolia used repression and suppression in order to usher in a new age of industrial and ideological construction. The new ideology was to raise up the masses and release them from the bondage of overlordship under the old nomadic leadership to transform the Mongol polity into the Mongolian nation ruled by the people. Replacing the images and shrines relating to the past on the khoimor in the “ger were the representations of modernization; radio, money, photos of socialist heroes, prizes and diplomas” (Humphrey, 1974, p. 274). Books in the ger, which were once the sacred texts for the eyes of lamas and senior men and placed on the khoimor, were now replaced by socialist approved literature and kept on the women’s side at the head of the marital bed where both women and men could read them (Humphrey, 1974, p. 275). The traditional khot ail were disbanded and aimag territories reframed to break the ties of kinship and even nutag. Singular families were relocated in great collectives, negdel, a process.
completed by the early 1960s, where they formed new bonds and had new leaders in the socialist social structure.

According to Lindskog, the calculated impact was to sever ties of traditional collaboration and destroy the traditional pastoral management system along with its leadership structure (Lindskog, 2010, p. 49). The positioning criteria for seating in the _ger_ was also restructured with new, often young, party leaders taking over the honoured spaces (Lindskog, 2010, p. 48). The _yos_ of the past was being rewritten and the new generation of power, in which the Borjigin–Chinggisid leadership lineage played no part for the first time in a thousand years, was relegating anything from the pre-socialist era into a reinterpreted and distant history (Humphrey, 1992, p. 376). Sukhbaatar was the young working class hero credited with establishing the Mongolian People’s Army and the newspaper for the Mongolian People’s Revolutionary Party, and was touted as Mongolia’s Lenin for most of the century (Kaplonski, 2004, pp. 23, 163).

Despite the suppression of the past and the fearful oppression that could be visited upon ordinary people, underground resistance existed. Kaplonski writes about the existence of unofficial histories during these times, and Linskog gathered memories from today’s rural Mongolians of the hidden practices of Buddhist worship, with sutra’s hidden under the floorboards or buried under the _ger_ itself, alongside active engagement in balancing the relationships with the spiritual forces in the land (Kaplonski, 2004, p. 110; Lindskog, 2010, p. 179). Communist governments, in Mongolia and other places in Inner Asia, provided the moral exemplars they wanted people to emulate; heroes of socialism and productive workers who served the greater good of the people. Yet the relational space for personal choosing and creating of _ulger_ in the moral dimension of _surtakhuan_ was
not wholly replaced by strong government encouragement to emulate the moral examples of “simplistic party-inspired variants” (Humphrey, 1997, p. 25). Mongolian morality relating to exemplars, drawn from a long history, showed itself to be, according to Humphrey, “resistant to overt ideological pressures” (Humphrey, 1997, p. 43).

_Yos and surtakhuu_ are moral dimensions in Mongol nomadic culture of the past and Mongolian culture today. They have quite likely been evolving for millennia, their early history still shrouded in the mists of time, yet their development from at least the time of the Mongol Empire demonstrates a continuity and adaptability. Nomadic practices of morality show a robustness and wholeness in their endurance and development through history. There is no reason to suppose that these moral dimensions have been completely dismantled and replaced by any introduced theology or ideology, or that they are no longer present in the interpretations and moral responses of Mongolians today. Evidence seems to speak to the contrary.

**Seeking a Modern Mongolian Identity**

If Mongolia is situated in a long history and rich culture, then the modern Mongolian identity that is being sought is also historically and culturally embedded as Mongolians imagine and aspire to a future of flourishing. Chinggis Khaan has become an “anchor point” for historical understanding and many Mongolians today affirm his influence in their lives and in their way of thinking about who they are or might be, perceiving him to be the essence of all that is Mongol (Kaplonski, 1998, p. 10; 2004, p. 119). Indeed, as Lhamsuren states, the ancestor of the Chinggisid lineage is identified as the ancestral genealogy of all Mongols (Lhamsuren, 2006, p.
The creation and preservation of the Mongol Uls is the primary interpretive criteria for identifying milestones in Mongolian history, and the historical heroes are important boundary markers at significant junctures in this story. Kaplonski notes the role of historical boundary marker that these leaders play is accompanied by their role as moral exemplar, thus giving a moral overtone to this history (Kaplonski, 2004, p. 120).

The most prominent and most revered is Chinggis Khaan, whose place in the minds and hearts of Mongolians today is described by Baabar as that of “lodestar, spiritual force, object of national and personal pride” and, in Tenggerist interpretation, as a significant entity in the constellation of spiritual entities that exist in the Tenggeri-Etugen embrace (Baabar, 2004, p. 34). Chinggis Khaan’s qualities are interpreted as noble and deserving of reverence because he united the scattered peoples of the steppe, forging the Mongol Uls into a new ethnic identity (Kaplonski, 2004, pp. 132, 142). Previous nomadic uls and empires are also part of the history of the Mongol Uls, for instance the Hunnu Uls, formed a thousand years before the Mongol Uls, is considered by Mongolian historians to be the first Mongolian state, the ethnic ancestors of the Mongol Uls, and therefore the first coming together of the nomadic uls (Kaplonski, 2004, p. 109). Kaplonski also names Zanabazar as another prominent nomadic leader, revered as the first living Buddha of the Mongols who saved them from being overrun by the Oird (Kaplonski, 2004, p. 180). The third person Kaplonski names as a noteworthy leader in the light of the perseveration of the Mongol Uls is Sukhbaatar, the red hero of socialism and not of the Chinggisid lineage, who was favoured, not because he was responsible for initiating the era of socialism, but because he brought about independence and saved the Mongol Uls from eventual extinction by China (Kaplonski, 2004, p. 180). Even those who
ushered in the current era of democracy, particularly Zorig, who was assassinated in the 1990s, are counted as worthy leaders with exemplar qualities because they saved the Mongol Uls from the yoke of Russian control (Kaplonski, 2004, p. 159).

Nomads in the Countryside

After 250 years of accepting overlordship by a foreign power, first the Manchu rule from China and then Stalin’s rule from Russia, the Mongol nomads successfully gained their autonomy. Though the centuries since Chinggis Khaan’s creation of the Mongol Uls are a testament to the tenacity of the Chinggisid lineage to provide the backbone, the stem, to the unity of the Mongol nomads, they emerged from the twentieth century not as Mongol nomads but as Mongolians living in a national territory called Mongolia. Today, Mongolians have an outlook of great hope for their nation’s story. Currently in a chapter of transition from socialism to the freedom of self-rule in a global world, they are tasked with developing a modern Mongolian identity, though the nature of this modern identity is not yet entirely clear to them. The countryside still looks much like it always has: ger dot the valleys and mixed herds roam the grassland; ovoo, both rock cairns and Buddhist fashioned stupas, have appeared again on the ridge crests between valleys and on mountain tops; rural people ride horses and still wear the traditional deel and curly-toed boots in the winter; and the traditional festivals of Naadam and Tsagaan Sar are highlights of the national and local calendar year.

The socialist era may be in the past, but its Russian apartment blocks, schools, government buildings, museums and performance theatres remain in the cities and towns that are spread over the landscape like a grid. The early 1990s revolution that shrugged off the yoke of socialism and ushered in democracy was peaceful and swift,
though economically devastating for the previously Soviet-supported government. The international development sector and bilateral donors were invited into Mongolia to lend assistance to the country’s economic development, and with it the doors opened to the many social, economic, technological and ideological forces of modernity and globalization. In the country’s capital, Ulaanbaatar, the building of modern glass high-rises and congested roads has spread at a rate unprecedented in the country, as wealth and work opportunities created by the mining boom give everyone hope for economic wellbeing and self-sufficiency.

Nomads in the City

However, there is an uneasiness accompanying the transformation of Ulaanbaatar into a city of the twenty-first century. Medical researchers observe a malaise gripping rural and urban Mongolians, recognized in traditional Mongol nomadic medicine as yadargaa, a fatigue-related illness that results from lifestyle imbalance. Those most likely to experience it are women, the elderly and urban residents, those who are most disenfranchised in a consumer capitalist economy (Kohrt, Hruschka, Kohrt, Panebianco, & Tasgaankhuu, 2004, p. 471). Women were swept up in the socialist feminist movement that disrupted family relationships and shifted women’s focus of living from the ger (Baabar, 2004, pp. 308-309). During socialism, girls were encouraged to gain an education, and, as they entered into the workforce, women experienced strong social support so their time was not so dominated by mothering responsibilities. In the first years of the transition era during the early 1990s, kindergarten care was expensive or non-existent, and there was no income support available during maternity leave. Yet the traditional responsibilities
of maintaining the hearth and the family cohesion around it, still fall largely on the shoulders of women (Skapa & Fenger Benwell, 1996, pp. 135-137).

Tsetsenbileg notices the “fraying societal fabric” of the traditional Mongol nomadic close-knit community, something he attributes to the widespread adoption of objectives of a “super-competitive and goal-oriented world” (Wang, 2000, p. 11). He claims that not only are the youth of Ulaanbaatar dressing as young Americans in “blue jeans and Adidas,” but the cultural norms established by Chinggis Khaan—a peaceful neighbourhood, government by law, universalism, equal rights and respect for nature—are being eroded by outside forces (Wang, 2000, p. 11).

Democratic and Capitalist Re-Interpretations of Nomadic Identities, Relationships, and Ways of Life

The central identity of the Mongol nomad, the nomadic way of life, had suffered the loss of the leadership lineage that had created, sustained and maintained the Mongol Uls. The, socialist restructuring of nomadic society had sought to give power to the masses, though in reality it was the ideological imposition and overlordship of a foreign power. The ideal of the new age of transition was the long desired autonomy for the People of the Felt-Walled Tents, yet the immediate consequence of having shrugged off the modern overlords was that of a devastating economic collapse. The international community, rapidly gaining experience in salvaging post-communist countries, finally heard the century old Mongol request for recognition and relationship as an autonomous polity. The Great Khural and its international advisors determined the adoption of a free market economy to be the immediate solution for both economic recovery and integration with the international economic system. A centralized decision was made to rapidly de-construct the
socialist pastoral nomadic negdel structures and privatize the ownership of the negdel livestock to those who had served in these negdel as socialist herders. The collective notion of property that underpinned both the traditional nomadic and socialist economies was dramatically challenged by the neo-liberal notion of economy and ownership. Without the negdel structure, many rural people shrugged off the socialist herder identity to emerge as the traditional nomadic pastoralists, yet they were at a loss as to how to manage the pastoral needs of their allocated livestock share (Sneath, 2002, pp. 200, 203).

The singular ail ger could not flourish economically by managing their animals without a collective approach to the use of essential resources, both natural and technological. Many returned to establishing the traditional networks of khot ail; either back to their birth nutag, or by remaining in the informal neighbourhood nutag they found themselves in after socialism (Bold, 1996, p. 75; Bulag, 1998, p. 126; Sneath, 2002, p. 204). The basic ail ger unit primarily looked to their kinship connections to form khot ail, and to the relationships established in the now deconstructed negdel, both serving as extended networks to call on for support when needed (Humphrey & Sneath, 1999, p. 158; Lindskog, 2000, p. 6). Most crucial to the understanding of socio-economic functioning in khot ail is the traditional leadership required for pastoral management to provide the skills of resource allocation and trade connection networks (Humphrey & Sneath, 1999, pp. 121, 295). The modern day khot ail coalesced around a more wealthy ail ger whose head assumed the lead role and accepted poorer kin or acquaintances who could assist with looking after the animals in return for the benefit of trade connections and resource access (Humphrey & Sneath, 1999, p. 175). In many ger, the Buddhist shrine was restored to the khoimor, and, in both traditional ger and modern

The Mongol nomad identities of the experienced horseman caring for his animals and the hardworking mother caring for her family in the ger, once dominant identities, no longer are the dominant ideals in modern Mongolia. Most Mongolians now live in towns and cities, with nearly half in the capital city of Ulaanbaatar, having permanently left the traditional pastoral nomadic lifestyle to embrace one of the numerous hybrid combinations of nomadic and settled ways of life (Bruun, 2006, pp. 227-228). The modern ideal appears to be the well-educated young business person living in the city with a car instead of a horse, leaving the rural Mongolian alienated, even cut off, because of poor communication and transport routes, and socially relegated to the lowly status of “herder” (Bruun, 2006, p. 222).

The older people who experienced the pain of cultural and historical denial yearned for yos to return as the dominant ideology, respecting it as the protector of Mongolness. Forgetting yos is tantamount to losing the Mongol identity, according to the authors of the Great Dictionary of Mongolian Customs of 1992, who, in so saying, make a damming critique of the socialist period as morally bankrupt (Kaplonski, 2004, p. 177). Much of traditional yos revolves around movement and positioning in the ger and its core, long aligned with the Chinggisid lineage, now not physically present as its “stem,” to establish the hierarchy of power and authority. Ger hospitality etiquette and khot ail functioning have to make some challenging transpositions to be relevant in the modern city of apartment blocks and high rises.

In the absence of socialism and of the Chinggisid lineage to lead the Mongol Uls into the future, there is a sense of disorder, of anarchy and leaderlessness. The leaders of the nation are challenged with transposing the protective core of yos, the
leadership lineage into the modern era. The quest to establish a modern Mongolian identity that is distinctive and reflects its Mongol nomadic heritage is having to navigate through the impact of twentieth century modernization and the consequences of the eradication of the traditional Chinggisid leadership structure, and now with the international forces of globalization. The virtual deification of Chinggis Khaan has become, for many, a moral necessity in order to re-establish order in the Mongol nomadic moral landscape in modern Mongolia.

**The Plurality of Moral Horizons in the Transition Era**

The moral horizons facing Mongolians today hail from the distant past as a cosmology still embodied within the *ger*, that is meshed with Buddhist conceptions and purposes, that is still tied to shamanic functions, and, from the recent past, that is tied to a communist ideology that honours the masses, promotes education for all and values industrialisation. Today Mongolians face an expanding plurality of competing moral horizons when seeking to come to terms with their new context. As modern Mongolians welcome strangers into their family and friendship groups, engage in business with the international community, and share with diverse people the social practices that mark Mongolian and international societies, they expand their exposure to many moral and spiritual horizons, both religious and not, sometimes with the tolerance and even acceptance of the glorious past or with the caution of more cloistered times. In the maelstrom of change and economic development confronting them, the reclaiming of the past has a crucial role in establishing a connection to those important historical and cultural dimensions of identity that make up the Mongolian sense of self and restoring their sense of cultural embeddedness as People of the Felt-Walled Tents.
Historical and anthropological research is exponentially growing after the constrictions of the recent past as both Mongolians and non-Mongolians from all over the world take interest. The revival of Lamaism and the re-establishment of monasteries around the country is, for many, a necessary activity to reclaim the past now that they are finally free to practice their beliefs openly. For others, it involves returning to the shaman as much as to the lama for guidance and healing, whatever their current religious affiliation or lack thereof. Many shamans today are not ideologically connected with shamanic understandings, but rather continue the rituals of the tradition (Jack Weatherford, 2014). Mongolness is also being restored and reflected in the national sports of horseracing, wrestling and archery during the Naadam festival, the making of hundreds of buuz, steamed dumplings filled with meat, for hosting family members during the Tsagaan Sar new year festival, and staying in ger and riding horses in the countryside during the summer.

Mongol nomadic morality, as anthropologist Caroline Humphrey describes it, was more focused on “practices of the self” through the discourse of moral exemplarity than issues surrounding strict adherence to rules (Humphrey, 1997, p. 43). Kaplonski claims the self-oriented morality of the nomads has become fused with necessity for rules that will re-establish balance and order (Kaplonski, 2004, pp. 120-121). Consequently, the source of moral authority in Mongolia today, suggests Humphrey, is the historical origin of the Mongolian culture situated in the deep past (Humphrey & Mandel, 2002, p. 375).
Summary

Mongolian history is the story of a long and continuous nomadic culture that was not significantly affected by the settled farming and city way of life until the twentieth century. The Mongol nomadic culture was not adopted by formerly settled farming and city civilizations. Even during the great Mongol Empire, when the nomad identity became “Mongol nomad,” the transition to nomadic life never occurred for the peoples they conquered. The Mongol nomads did, however, facilitate the cultural and commercial exchange of other great civilizations across the Eurasian continent. Their own nomadic way of life was also relatively impervious to the influence of other cultures.

Buddhism pacified the warrior spirit of the Mongol nomad and replaced the religious power structures of their nomadic society. Buddhist beliefs and values were adapted into the nomadic cosmological understandings instead of replacing them. The Buddhist lamas took responsibility for shaman ceremonies and holy sites, and still the people knew themselves as the Mongol nomads. Socialism disrupted and over-turned the governing power structures. Its ideology created a settled city-dwelling life for some of the nomads, and they were renamed Mongolians. Yet, its ideology only brought cosmetic changes to nomadic life, and the semi-arid grassland steppes resisted the fenced farming methods of the settled farming ways. Democracy and capitalism expanded city life and diversified commercial opportunities to such an extent that more Mongolians now live in cities than in the countryside. Yet, life in and around the ger is still relatively unchanged, and many city-dwellers constantly travel to the countryside for their weekends and even move to their family countryside dwellings in the summer. The city-dweller also brings the cosmological
understandings embedded in the *ger* to their city apartment, negotiating with walls to replicate the representational arrangement of the *ger*.

The assembly of beliefs and values for Mongolians has its own unique history and is, perhaps, in greater turmoil today in this period of accelerated transition from nomadic life to city life. In the milieu of the era of transition the question of cultural identity has emerged. Mongolians of the city proudly call themselves nomads, and yet the people of the countryside living the nomadic life are known as lowly herders. The Mongolian nomads are seeking to understand the new interpretations of self and its embodiment as nomads dwelling in the *ger* of the mind, yet living in the apartments of the city. However, the city-dwelling Mongolian nomads have become engaged in many other social practices than the herder lifestyle on the grasslands, complicating understandings about the kinds of meaningful forms of life that fit within the traditional nomadic understandings of life. The many and diverse “good” ways to be and act are swirling like confusing currents about what constitutes flourishing in the city’s moral space.

The moral form of life is about being and becoming good, which always sits in the moral space, the moral topography, of the historical and cultural goods. Human beings are embedded in a particular time and history, moving towards a future. Their particular moral topography shapes their sense of self, their being, and forms the background to the challenges and possibilities for the future.

The cross-cultural coherence of The Virtues Project in a Mongolian setting, the second story arising out of the narrative case study, can now be understood in the context of a Mongolian moral topography of historical and cultural goods.
Chapter 8: Engaging With The Virtues Project and the Quest for Mongolian Becoming

Introduction

Mongolians are defined by a long history of a Mongol nomadic way of life. They identify themselves as the Mongol Uls, the people Chinggis Khaan brought together as the People of the Felt-Walled Tents, and have features in their moral horizons vastly different from that of English-speaking countries. Since the days of glory as people of the Mongol Empire, the quest for the Mongol nomads has been to preserve the Mongol Uls. Despite subjugation under Manchu rule, and efforts to erase the past during socialism, the Mongol Uls has survived, albeit without its backbone leadership lineage. Still, in a time of transition, the Mongol Uls seeks to rediscover its own identity independent of the manipulation of others with different agendas.

The narratives contributed by the Mongolian teachers are woven together to reveal a cross-cultural coherence of The Virtues Project in a Mongolian context. Running through the narrative texts of the case study were heard several Mongolian contrapuntal voices. There was an old voice that craved for the restoration of moral order in the face of a growing plurality of ways of valuing as the Mongol Uls engages with the global community. The ancient voice of respect was heard. The voice of closeness, embodied and embedded in the ger, was also revived. The moral dimensions of being Mongolian were enriched and they enhanced the process of
becoming Mongolian in a time of transition. The virtues were not unfamiliar, though not often verbalized in the same manner as in English, and, as they entered into the dialogue of the school community, the Mongol nomadic interpretations and valuing of them became reinterpreted and re-valued. The teachers came to understand that virtues are “group work” expressed through dialogue and in action. The Virtues Project had a cross-cultural coherence for the Mongolian teachers and students, enabling them in their moral quest for unity in a time when they were seeing a confusing diversity.

**The Quest for Order in Mongolia**

Despite the promise modernity and independence held for Mongolia and the continued flourishing of the Mongol Uls, there was a sense of unease amongst the teachers about the generation they were teaching. Their students, and youth in general, seemed to be losing their “Mongol-ness” and were unaware or uncaring about the deeply held values of a distinguished Mongol nomadic way of life. The plurality of ways of being and valuing, sourced from outside Mongolia, were clouding the moral horizons of today’s young Mongol Uls, who were more attracted to the foreign beliefs and values that consumerism and global social media portrayed. This vastly expanded moral plurality, the diversity of valuing in other ways of life and social practices, created “messiness in the moral side of life,” in Batukhan’s opinion (Researcher Journal, July 2009).

The teachers were also concerned with the lack of order in the moral side of life. Bat-Erdene commented on the diversity of religious beliefs growing amongst the Mongol Uls, “such as Muslims, Christians, and Buddhists,” and was concerned that,
“if a person believes in one religion, the other people discriminate” (February 2010). He saw in the plurality of moral perspectives resulting from opening up to the rest of the world a lack of order that was confusing for children and made their learning inconsistent, or, to use Batukhan’s term, messy. Bat-Erdene saw, “various abnormalities and negative culture that negatively affect children and youth,” and feared that children might “be attracted to the external view and start getting involved in wrong and abnormal behaviours” (February 2010). Orderliness is an important “life good” in Mongol nomadic culture, as may be indicated by the condition of pathological distress, yadargaa, due to lifestyle imbalance for Mongolians living without a sense of order, or moral balance, in their life.

Order is embedded in the Mongol nomadic way of life. The ger is representative of the order of the cosmos, its furniture and belongings physically ordered to reflect the greater order of the universe. The different nomadic identities are shaped by an ordered constellation of roles. The inward management focus within and immediately around the ger and the outward management focus of relationships with the rest of society are both positioned at the foundations of society. The khans are identities that managed society and its outward focus, and they are no less subject to a greater order because they are governed by succession, reliant on the allegiance of society, and subject to the nature of the cosmos. There are spiritual identities too, ezen, whose leadership is associated with features in the environment and who manage the order of the natural world from the spiritual realm. Relational engagement, whether with other people, the environment or the spiritual dimension, is governed by the various categories of yos to achieve balance and order. Yos, when understood and applied in skilful ways, can bring about good relationships even with malevolent forces. The skilful enactment of gerin yos, for example, is to maintain,
increase, or create the positive flow of power between visitor and host, ensuring the
good of all brought together within the *ger*. Strangers or foreigners are subject to,
and beneficiaries of, *yos*, as they enter into the *ger*, and tolerance is shown to those
who are ignorant or not so skilful in *yos*. This sentiment underpins Tsogzolboo’s
observation that there is an intolerant attitude amongst her Mongolian compatriots
towards the increased interaction with foreigners of different cultures and religions.
She judged these Mongolians to be “nationalist at some point and therefore can’t
accept them, they can’t sort them and reflect,” though she saw “nice behavioural
stuff comes with other religious influences” and they “have good approach”
(February 2010). The Mongol nomadic quest for order was aligned with and
reinterpreted to highlight the values of peace and compassion during the era of
Buddhism. Asralt drew on this background when she explained that she wanted to
“inform the children and their parents about how to save them out of problems
peacefully and how to avoid using violence” (February 2009).

The increasing diversity of people, ways of life and ways of relating that
Mongolians today are coming into contact with challenges the capacities to sort and
reflect so as to bring order into one’s moral life and outlook. Battsooj argued that
even the Virtues Project’s list of 52 virtues might present, and even cause, a kind of
moral plurality to some Mongolians because “people don’t know there are so many
virtues, therefore they follow their own beliefs” and believed that “most Mongolians
looking at them feel depressed” (February 2010). However, the teachers and students
who worked with these many virtues in everyday conversations discovered changes
in themselves and in their relationships with others that they interpreted as a
restoration of order. Lack of moral order had come to be seen as a lack of conscious
practice of the 52 and many other virtues. They were also seen as the link between
their current way of life and the moral form of life that their Mongol nomadic forebears aspired to. Virtues were interpreted as the elements of moral being, elements that needed management to ensure the flourishing of orderly and creative people.

Today we are not orderly because of a lack of virtues and many kinds of challenges are faced. These kinds of things are noticed in many ways. This is because of our system. I think if from the beginning we, as students, were directed to our virtues, maybe now we would be orderly, creative people. We can be excellent people if we are educated like this in high school. (Ireedui, May 2009)

The Ethics of Respect

One of the strong and enduring cultural understandings of the Mongol Uls is respect for those older and ranked higher. It is embedded, for example, in the yos that negotiates with human and spiritual forces, in the deference given to elders or those of higher ranking in the positioning arrangements of the ger. In the early stages of the case study, the younger teachers judged the youth of today’s society, and many of those they were teaching, to be lacking in the highly valued Mongolian quality of respect. A much-repeated Mongolian proverb compares respect for elders and those with higher rank with the collar on the deel, the Mongolian traditional felt-lined coat. The cosmological understanding of rank is expressed as higher and northern in the arrangement of the ger, which, translated into a clothing context, places the collar higher on the deel. Enkhturleg referred to this proverb when explaining the lack of respect in youth today:
In my opinion, young people today are not enough to reach the level of
general Mongolian. Why I’m saying this is because Mongolians respect each
other, yeah, brother and sister. “Person has brother, deel has collar.”
Younger brothers, or sisters, have to sit on a lower level than an older
brother or sister. Generally, we are losing our respectful nature. Respect is a
very big philosophy, yeah. There is nothing among these youth today. My
first expectation is that they be respectful, yeah. (Enkhturleg, May 2009)

The students were perhaps more culturally embedded in yos and respect than
the teachers judged. Those who participated in the demonstration student workshops
in January 2009 showed their love and respect for the virtues by carrying the virtues
cards given to them in a little silk bag with a drawstring in the breast pocket of their
jackets or inside their shirts close to their chest. There is a custom, still practiced
today, to carry precious things inside the deel. For example, snuff bottles are brought
out from the inside pocket of the traditional deel by Mongolian men to exchange
with other men in a handshake during significant cultural festivals. There is also a
tradition to wrap sacred things, such as gifts or holy words, in silk and store them in
the northern place of honour on the khoimor in the ger, or in the inside breast pocket
of the deel. Enkhturleg later reinforced cultural honouring of the virtues by creating a
class khoimor as a virtues corner to “post virtues materials on it” (November 2009).
This was placed at the opposite end of the room from the door, as is its positioning in
the ger.

Disrespect, however, was an issue amongst the teachers in the school. Those
higher up in the hierarchy of school education tended to be “unapproachable” for
those lower in rank, with management personnel accused of putting “rules higher
than people” (Tsogzolboo, May 2009). There was a real sense of isolation for the
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young teachers when they first came into the school. Ireedui found she “couldn’t go to older teachers and speak confidently with them” (Bileg-Oyun, May 2009). Tsogzolboo “was shocked and regretted coming here” when she started teaching in the school two years previously (May 2009). Bolordusal “observed the older teachers were haughty towards me” (May 2009). Yet, the younger teachers experienced empowering respect as they became more engaged in virtues language, the effect of which Enkhturleg expressed as, “the workshop seemed to give me things I lost and saved me out of my loneliness” (February 2009).

The school system, established under Russian development assistance, was a new phenomenon for the traditional Mongol nomadic way of life. Russian socialist understandings of rank and position inherent in the adopted school hierarchical structure reinterpreted traditional notions of respect in the new roles and power relationships of school institutions. The older teachers of the case study school engaged with their colleagues and students using a disempowering interpretation of respect:

People think that because of their old age, they don’t need to change themselves and when they get retired everything will be solved... If they manage not to kill other people’s children they stay satisfied with themselves… I think they feel like having a great power in their hands.

(Tsogzolboo, May 2009)

Asralt explained the attitude of the resistance of some of the older female teachers was like the attitude of a mother-in-law asking, “Who do you think you are, daughter-in-law!” (April 2010). Some of the older female teachers equated their position with that of mother-in-law in the ger. Respect of the younger person to the older person is present in the traditional relationship between a daughter-in-law and
her mother-in-law. The old Mongol nomadic custom of exogamous marriage required the move of the young bride from her ger family to her husband’s ger, which would be in the same khot ail as her new mother-in-law. The positioning in the ger for the new daughter-in-law was to the south and close to the door, and for her mother-in-law to the north and close to the most honoured place. The school’s walled architecture was not easily superimposed by the cosmological ordering embodied in the ger, and the physical positioning of an older teacher in relation to a younger teacher that would denote rank was not so clear. An interpretation of respect that was more readily available was to respond to younger teachers and students with anger and verbal abuse to assert their position.

The ethics of respect can be defined by the flow of power in relationship, which Rollo May describes in his account of the ethics of power (R. May, 1972, pp. 99-119). In an exploitative approach to respect the exploiter demands respect from others in ways that expose the other to the threat of harm and renders the other powerless. Manipulative respect causes others to respect in ways that benefit the manipulator yet disables the freedom and dignity of the one respecting. Competitive respect raises the respect afforded the self by diminishing respect afforded others. Nurturative respect enables and empowers the other to flourish. Integrative respect is a mutual respect between people that empowers each to flourish and become more respected by and respectful of others through shared engagement.

The younger teachers were still bound by the deep and ingrained cultural narrative of respect for the older and higher ranked person, and though they did not condone the disrespect and cruelty shown to them by their older teaching colleagues, they were not ready to give up on showing respect themselves. They found in the virtues language strategy a way of showing respect that transformed the ethic of
relational power into one that was at once morally nurturing and an invitation to integrative and respectful engagement that went both ways. The moral landscape of women’s cultural relationships was retrieved and recast in virtues terms to bring about the positive flow of relational power and respect between the older and younger teachers. The moral landscape of the teaching and learning landscape was also recast in virtues terms, and a positive flow of relational power and respect was evident.

By attending The Virtues Project, our team better knew each other, became closer to each other and if something happens we think what virtues we have to show. For students: how to acknowledge them by what virtues. Even students look for virtues acknowledgements from their teachers, we can see that from their eyes. In the school, teachers now better understand each other, more responsible, more active and their tendency towards their work has been positively changed. (Bolormelmii, February 2010)

Respect came to be reinterpreted within the school structure as an empowering virtue practiced as something given to others instead of something demanded from others, though this was not an easily accessed reinterpretation for some. Bileg-Oyun related in a story about Ireedui, who she said was respectful of the good qualities of her grade 10 students in the way she spoke to them with virtues language. As the youngest teacher and newest member of staff, Ireedui found that not only did her students become empowered; she also became empowered as her students responded with respect in return. One of the older teachers also noticed the respect students had towards Ireedui, though she interpreted this through a disempowering “ethic of respect” when she said to Bileg-Oyun, “How come I am not preferred to the new teacher, Ireedui? I must teach those students” (June 2009).
Expressing respect through virtues language worked in two ways. Firstly, respect was given to a person through the recognition of virtues intentions in their actions. Secondly, respect was recognised as the virtues intention in a person’s actions when it was given, not when it was taken. In this way, respect was not a cause for estrangement and coldness between people, respect had the power to create warm relationships between people and to be the cause of flourishing for persons and their community. The Virtues Project had exposed teachers to the “good virtues of Mongolians, like patience, tolerance, and respect that have influenced us previously” said Bolormelmii about the “useful virtues that helped our lives… We did not really recognize that before, but it was there in reality” (February 2010).

**Materially Embodied and Relationally Embedded in the Ger**

Deeply embedded in the young teachers’ background assumptions was the nomadic cosmological framework represented by the ger, which they drew on to interpret The Virtues Project and its impact on their relationships with others. All schools in Mongolia that were built during the socialist era were modelled after the efficient yet austere Russian architecture and, like mainstream schools in the West, were focused on functionality, hallways and single cell classrooms. The school blocks, built from the mid-twentieth century on and looking very similar to the Russian apartment blocks built at the same time, were in marked contrast to the ger the Mongol Uls had lived in for millennia up until that point. The case study school was built some 30 years before, during the socialist era, and was typically stacked on two levels with little functional outside space between the school and the next apartment block. The understanding of relationships and even of the cosmic order of
Mongolians today is still embodied in the *ger*, half of whom still live in the countryside or in the *ger* settlements around the city, and the other half of whom spend at least some time during the summer in a *ger*. The walled-in learning and enclosed travelling spaces are the antithesis of the *ger* with its wall-less inner space and the open outer space of the steppe. This was the contrasting point in Bileg-Oyun’s comment about the change in school relationships:

To compare, it means a wall separating the hallway and this room, right? Let us say the wall is the thing that separates people too. When the wall is removed there comes close relationship between them. (Bileg-Oyun, Virtues Connection meeting, February 2009)

Bileg-Oyun’s comment was made in the context of a conversation about the meaning of *iluu oir dotno*, a meaningful Mongolian phrase directly translated at its first mention in the case study in February 2009 as “very close communication,” a term which includes notions of communication, connection and relationship. The phrase was first used in the case study in a Virtues Connection meeting in February 2009 when the teachers were explaining the effect virtues language was having on their relationships with each other and with their students. The constant repetition of this phrase during that meeting became a curious phenomenon. In a subsequent Virtues Connection meeting in the same month the teachers were asked what *iluu oir dotno* meant to them. Their explanations revealed its deeper meaning of interdependent closeness one might find in a close-knit family or friendship group.

Ireedui: It means we trust the other person to share.

Bolordusal: It means the person knows the other person well. We know about keeping others’ secrets, right? Some people do not know.

Bileg-Oyun: To compare, it means a wall separating the hallway and this
room, right? Let us say the wall is the thing that separates people too. When the wall is removed there comes close relationship between them.

Galmaa: Can I say my opinion? Ok. I have an idea too. Let us say there are two people. Those people communicate with each other and get each other’s idea in their own level of understanding. Therefore there is no actual understanding and closeness between them. When their communication is brought in the same level of understanding, then there comes close communication. It does not mean they have to agree with each other.

Ireedui: They see each other in positive way. They smile.

Bolordusal: Open. They express their opinion freely. Free. They say what they want to say freely.

Bileg-Oyun: Trust. I can see their positive atmosphere. It is a bit difficult to communicate this way with elder teachers, whom we don’t usually socialize with. I guess they would think what is this thing she is talking about.

Ireedui: Friendly. Love. They will shine from inside out.

(Virtues Connection, February 2009)

Bileg-Oyun’s use of the lack of walls in the ger as a metaphor for relationships is no accident. In the context of her colleagues’ comments, iluu oir dotno is materially embodied in the ger. The physical experience of stepping into a ger is an entirely different sensation to entering into a school with corridors and walled rooms. The south-facing door is short and an adult needs to bend to enter. Once inside everything is seen and known. Movement within the ger requires at least a tacit understanding of the positioning and movement of others in this shared space. People usually sit in a ger and when they do their eyes are at a similar level. Iluu oir dotno is also relationally embedded in the ger. While sitting together in a circle, the closeness and seeing each other’s “level of understanding” seeps into the conversation between
the people enveloped within the ger. The ideas flowing in the conversation, the communication between people, are listened to carefully for the speaker’s perspective. This is in no small part because of the effect of the fire between them that provides warmth. The hearth in the ger is an ancient sacred symbol that connects Etugen with Tenggeri and embodies notions of love and nurturing. The hearth is also the place of food preparation and therefore nourishment for those sitting around it. The one tending the hearth and preparing food also has the role of maintaining the close communication and relationship of the people belonging to it and coming around it. Usually this is the mother, yet when visitors enter the ger the father joins her on the east side and also engages in the maintenance of close communications and relationships around the fire. A flourishing ail ger is one that has a positive atmosphere, is friendly, loving and hospitable to visitors, and creates or transforms relationships into iluu oir dotno. Just as geriin yos governs movement within the ger, it also governs communication, giving host and visitor the capacity to create warm relationships. Geriin yos and virtues language both have the similar purpose of creating peace between people by drawing on the notions of respect for, and the dignity of, human life as guided by shared understandings and related practices.

Tsogzolboo considered the virtues of The Virtues Project and concluded, “I can say 100% they are like the values that my father and mother gave me, and they totally align. There is no single thing that contradicts” (February 2010). Ireedui noted that the purpose of The Virtues Project, which she interpreted as “peaceful earth,” was the same as hers (May 2009). Bat-Erdene saw the results of virtues language developed “right and good mindset” and “proper communication and relationship” in students and considered The Virtues Project to be in agreement with the good as he understood it (February 2010). The Virtues Project strategy of companioning aligned
with the *yos* of hospitality for Enkhturleg, who used it to resolve misunderstandings between students, and also for the values of being friendly and helpful to individual students to “ease their pain and recovery to the right path” (February 2010).

The younger teachers used virtues language in a similar way to *geriin yos* to create respectful communication and warm relationships, in other words, to create peace between them and the older teachers. The use of virtues language in their conversations created a space in which they were open to discerning good moral intentions. In this space, teachers and students observed and listened to each other’s interpretations of diverse goods, the many virtues they were becoming familiar with, in the engagements with each other and in narrative responses. Each person’s interpretation in action and dialogue was treated as worthy, and although a plurality of interpretations flowed within the relational web of teachers and students, this plurality was embraced as it enriched moral understanding. Enkhturleg explained her old way of responding to those who judged her as “worthless” by their interpretation of what was good and assessed how she expressed it. “I used to stop to talk with that person,” she said, “I used to think very much I don’t need to talk with this person, might be I will get black energy” (May 2009). With the regular use of virtues language she changed her way of engaging with others and found a new way of thinking about them. She “came to recognize, to see, other peoples’ detailed virtues,” and “learnt to acknowledge other people just like telling normal things for me” (May 2009). Her perception of those who might judge her unworthy also changed.

> Everybody doesn’t have to be perfect, yeah. Yes, so I have changed myself a lot … I set boundaries for myself because I would like to see what kind of virtues would come out from me. (Enkhturleg, May 2009)
The virtues listed, and the many more alluded to, in The Virtues Project were “not unfamiliar” to the Mongolian teachers (Bileg-Oyun, November 2008) because they already knew about them from their own cultural and life experiences. The teachers already loved and valued the virtues they were recognizing in the actions and engagement with others. Though all perhaps felt this attraction, it was not enough of an incentive for all of the teachers to become involved in ongoing professional development to build skills in implementing the strategies. Work attitudes, role demands and the older negative culture surrounding teacher development were obstacles to overcome. The younger teachers were motivated and had the energy to transcend these obstacles. They and their students already understood the virtues as the good, and the Virtues Project’s descriptions of each of the 52 virtues in its list were resonant with the Mongolian teachers’ and students’ interpretations of these virtues in the practice of their lives. Bolormelmii had heard about Mongolia’s “material and immaterial” contribution to the world’s heritage from an international guest speaker visiting the school. When it was explained that “immaterial heritage includes things related to spirituality” she said, “I understood it related with virtues, and I thought there can be virtues heritage” (April 2010). In her workshop presentations on The Virtues Project, Bolormelmii noticed that “even if it is not included in the slides or books people take it as heritage,” adding that the Mongolian parents of today’s adults “gave us good virtues, that is why we are living happy” (April 2010).

The Mongol nomadic and Buddhist interpretations of order and respect, peace and compassion, cultural life goods of the deep past, were called upon by the teachers in their virtues language focus to reinstate them as features in the way of life loved and admired by the school community. Deeply embedded in the moral
frameworks of the teachers and students were the Mongol nomadic concepts of the
good, the nature of the human being and how to make sense of the world;
interpretations that endured, and sometimes were reinforced, through the eras of
Buddhism, socialism and transition. The teachers and students showed they valued
and loved the 52 virtues and others also, not only as their moral heritage, but also as
being foundational to a modern Mongolian morality.

**Enriched Mongol Nomadic Moral Dimensions for Becoming Mongolian**

_Yos_ was still highly valued amongst the case study teachers in their dealings
with others. They described good Mongolians as those who exemplify particular
virtues that are embedded in the _yos_ they practice. Asralt described her parents, who
strongly identified with _yos_ in everyday life, as “truthful, compassionate and helpful
people” (June 2009). Enkhturleg noticed the same virtues in her Mongolian
upbringing, describing in virtues terms the aim and results of _yos_ in her everyday life
growing up:

I want to live by my own principle like I never lie to others, manipulating
someone or living in a trick way. Since I was little I didn’t want these kinds
of things, I wanted to live in a truthful way… I grew up in a family
environment where if somebody needed help I would want to help. If there
was something I had but another person needed I would love to share.
(Enkhturleg, May 2009)

The translation for the English words “moral” and “morality” in the materials
developed and transcripts produced during the case study was _yos surtkhuun_, which
was understood more in terms of *yos*. Although *yos* is directly translated as moral rules and customs, and though there are codifications of *yos* available, the cultural and historical evolution of *yos* and its enactment in everyday life require it to be understood as materially embodied in such cultural spaces as the *ger* or movement in space during seasonal migration. It is also relationally embedded as a shared way of being or “together good” to bring about cohesive and coherent community functioning and human engagement. Bileg-Oyun indicated this when she explained how she understood the meaning of “moral,” or *yos surtakuun*:

> “Moral” means interacting with society based on moral codes. (Bileg-Oyun, June 2009)

The Virtues Project did not include knowledge of Mongolian *yos*, yet it provided tools it calls strategies that enabled teachers and students to access their own understanding and valuing of virtues in moral space, which for the Mongolian school community were integral to their conceptions and enactment of *yos*. The Virtues Project’s interpretations of the 52 virtues, found on the virtues cards (Virtues Project International, 2002b) and in the *Educator’s Guide* (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000), became part of the conversations about virtues, yet they did not dominate the dialogue. The practice of virtues language as acknowledgements, guides and corrections in teachable moments meant that the teachers and students were accessing their own interpretations and valuing in their everyday conversations. This happened more frequently than just at the sharing circle referencing of the virtues cards during the Tuesday morning lesson time, which was systematically arranged by the teachers to focus discussion on two virtues each week. Individual teachers integrated virtues foci into their subject lessons, as was the case with Ireedui who had students read two different virtues cards at the beginning of each mathematics lesson,
and then proceeded to encourage individual recognition and interpretation of these virtues in actions during the lesson. Yet there was frequent use of virtues language during the school day, both in class time and in the hallways, and even overheard during after school events.

Lindskog described that the experience of learning *yos* in the traditional way meant receiving a great deal of scolding from one’s mother in particular, as was her ethnographical field experience in the 1990s (Lindskog, 2000 p.59). Scolding was still considered to be a legitimate way of training children in “proper social conduct” by Batukhan, who commented that teachers were not necessarily “immoral just because they neglect, scold, and reject the students during the class” (February 2009). Admonishment, interpreted as scolding by many Mongolian teachers, was the typical method during the socialist era. “They control children, in my observation, from the beginning,” said Bolormelmii (May 2009). Socialist educational policy “enforced teachers to teach only scientific education,” said Asralt, which was taught to students “as though they were a pot to pour information into and when evaluating they would just check how well students know that information” (June 2009), an understanding of learning that justified the use of admonishment. Enkhturleg had her students’ parents telling her, “You don’t push children!” (May 2009), indicating they expected their children would be scolded.

In the younger teachers’ experience, this way of engaging with others in schools, particularly for students, was disempowering. They had themselves experienced this kind of education, as Bolormelmii remembers, “in socialist time our teacher was captivating us. Didn’t educate us as assertive. We grew up closed people” (May 2009). The traditional acceptance of scolding as a form of nurturing moral behaviour was not acceptable to Enkhturleg after she became proficient in the
use of the Virtues Project strategies. The aspect of scolding, she noticed, involved an exclusive focus on “defective virtues” in children, and she now preferred “to find out which virtues they should develop and tell them” in a caring way (April 2010). Scolding was transformed into virtues corrections, virtues guides and virtues-based boundaries. Virtues acknowledgments introduced the positive reinforcement of virtues expressed in valued ways in action and interaction. In this way, the teachers encouraged a moral “order” in their relationships with each other and their students, which was embedded in the understanding and practice of yos translated into their classroom context.

Surtakhuun, a personal ethics based on a relational construction of moral exemplarity, has been reinterpreted through history by dominant groups within the Mongol Uls, adding to the variety of ways it has come to be conceived. The dialogical nature of surtakhuun was possibly more often an inner dialogue within the shavi (student), in Mongol nomadic life, although no specific records of this are known. The closest record, at least in English, is the anthropological work of Caroline Humphrey, whose early research was on the periphery of the Mongolian borders where shamans were still practicing their ways. These areas were relatively unaffected by either socialism or even Buddhism. Her study of surtakhuun revealed an interpretation and functioning more likely to be a Mongol nomadic one. In this traditional interpretation of surtakhuun, the shavi transforms the surgaal (sayings and doings) of the bagshi (teacher) into ulger (moral exemplarity). It is the shavi, not the bagshi, who chooses who are their bagshi and which of their surgaal they choose to transform into ulger. When reinterpreted by Mongolian Lamaism, the learning of surtakhuun was in the form of a monologue flowing from the bagshi to the shavi. Socialism introduced hierarchical structures amongst students through the
appointment of pioneer leaders, who were recognised for their moral example as young socialist heroes and had the authority to manage their classmates’ behaviour as well as some small administrative tasks. It could be seen as a socialist reinterpretation of *surtakhuum* where state-selected *bagshi*, called socialist heroes, provided *ulger* to encourage the people, the *shavi*, to be more like them. During transition, and just prior to the experience of The Virtues Project, *surtakhuum* had been understood and practiced by the teachers and students in a private way with no rich dialogical space for this aspect of morality, whatever way it was interpreted.

The implementation of the Virtues Project strategies, particularly virtues language, brought these background understandings of *surtakhuum* into the space of moral dialogue and engagement. The interpretation of *surgaal* of students and teachers into virtues language transformed the everyday actions and interactions of ordinary people into *ulger*. Teachers told of learning from the *ulger* of their colleagues’ way of being, engaging and living:

> I really want to learn Shijirtuya’s peacefulness and Ireedui’s perseverance. I like those virtues … I have those beautiful friends and am working on learning from their virtue. I hope I am changing myself in some way. (Bolordusal, May 2009)

> If it were before The Virtues Project I would have just seen her kindness and left that alone. But now when I see her making lists of her tasks and I will take example and make one for myself too. She is very orderly. When this room was my office last year I never brought a single thing to decorate the room. But this year I take more care of my office in way I try to keep it orderly. (Tsogzolboo, May 2009)
I like to learn from others, for example, Bileg-Oyun’s self-discipline, and Bolormelmii is loving to her family. I learn things useful things for me.

(Enkhturleg, May 2009)

Virtues language amongst the school’s teachers and students flowed through webs of interlocution (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 63) in which all were bagshi and shavi simultaneously. In the exchange of a virtues acknowledgement the speaker interprets the surgaal of the receiver into ulger. In the dialogical relationship of virtues language the speaker is the bagshi, whether school teacher or school student, and the receiver is the shavi, whether school teacher or student. In the Lamaist interpretation, the receiver would also be shavi because the speaker conveyed to the receiver a certain moral understanding, thereby making the speaker also bagshi. Virtues corrections could also be resonant with the lama in the bagshi role that points out possible ways to transform the surgaal of the shavi into ulger, thereby making it possible for the shavi to become bagshi. Virtues guides could be resonant with Lamaist and socialist interpretation of providing heroic action, or ulger, for shavi to learn from. The unfamiliar in The Virtues Project was somehow familiar not only because of the virtues. It was also familiar because there was a resonance with how morality could be understood.

People say The Virtues Project is a totally different thing or other religious teaching and so on, but it is not. One United Nations official once said, “There are universal characteristics for all nations regardless of religion.”

Like that, this Virtues Project perfectly fits with what we believe.

(Bolormelmii, February 2010)

Virtues language established an open and continuous dialogue of surtakhuun for each individual to develop moral wisdom for themselves in everyday dialogical
relationship with others. All became shavi and all became bagshi in the exchange of virtues language, something Shijirtuya saw developing when she observed in March 2009, “they have shown their friends’ good virtues by examples. There were a quite a lot of students who knew each other very well and who were role models.” Bolormelmii had a positive outlook for the practice of recognizing examples of the good in each other and thought, “if we get welfare things from each other our lives will flourish” (May 2009). It also meant for Ireedui that “to be a role model to others does not mean you should be perfect,” advising herself, “be responsible, if you make a mistake be humble” (March 2009). Enkhturleg came to realize the power of virtues acknowledgments to empower her to become a better teacher.

The socialist era’s systematization of the bagshi role in the pioneer leader structure in education had been reinterpreted in the education system of the transition era as class and row leaders, and each were chosen for their moral example of confidence, academic strength, friendliness and ability to bring their peers together to cooperate on tasks such as cleaning the classroom and to pay attention during lessons. As a young teacher during the socialist era, Asralt had trained as a pioneer leader, a role that was transformed into the social worker role in schools, which she currently held (June 2009). She showed a particularly strong inclination to reinterpret this systematization of the socialist hero bagshi to consolidate the implementation of the Virtues Project strategies in the school. The moral education leadership structure of the socialist era had similarities to the Virtues Connection structure that was appearing in March 2009. Asralt, a member of the Virtues Connection, acted more or less as a liaison with the school management team. The Virtues Connection teachers were somewhat like the teacher pioneer leaders. Asralt encouraged them to choose grade 6.1 students to be facilitators of small groups, similar to the idea of student
pioneer leaders, in the first event of “virtues lessons” with other grades, because they were familiar with virtues language and were developing the good qualities admired by the teachers. The “old regime” also had “virtues principles and ethics lessons at schools,” remembered Asralt, leading her to reflect that moral education “needs to have a curriculum” (June 2009). The first virtues lesson event inspired Asralt to establish virtues lessons in the Tuesday morning student lesson time, replicating the systematic weekly “ethical lessons” structure of the previous era, though the content was quite different, and facilitators acted as leaders for the group sharing circles.

The personal ethics of students and teachers transformed with the continued use of virtues language. Students who participated in Virtues Project demonstration student workshops during January 2009 had “changed their speech” and “controlled their language,” according to Enkhturleg (February 2009). She gave the example of students using “virtues language including helpfulness and friendliness” in a discussion about self-development of virtues, and noticed “them using the virtues names every day” (February 2009). All the virtues were recognizable because they were embedded in the Mongol nomadic, Buddhist, socialist and even transition era’s way of life, encapsulated in yos and evident in surtakhuun. The accumulated moral wisdom in yos and personal ethics in surtakhuun that formed a basis for understanding Mongolian morality endured and was strengthened through various reinterpretations in Mongolia’s culture and history, and formed part of the background assumptions of the Mongolian teachers and students drawn on by them to interpret and implement the strategies of The Virtues Project in their particular way. The strategies of The Virtues Project, though, were unfamiliar and required effort on their part.
I realized that I had never been acknowledged for my virtues for these years but obeying the administration. This one took my effort and I used to do even more things than this. But they would consider it as if it was the normal activity. Generally I have never heard of acknowledgment from others.

(Enkhturleg, February 2009)

Virtues language came to be seen as a way to “keep your talk right and organized, for example, the heart and feeling should be right to have right speech and thoughts,” as Tsogzolboo reflected (February 2010). She was relating virtues that guided human action as the way of being of a real human being, a moral person, or khumun in traditional Mongolian cultural terms. Asralt observed that the activities she and the young teachers had carried out for the school as Virtues Project facilitators were appreciated as “the right things have been done,” and praised the leadership the young teachers had exemplified in their implementation of the Virtues Project strategies (February 2010).

The teachers’ Virtues Project experience gave them a sense that they had found an approach to bring back the much-loved “humane” cultural qualities in the students’ sense of self through the acknowledgement of the application of these qualities of character in the moral intent of their actions. Acknowledgements encouraged the fledgling interpretations of the students in the everyday small interactions between them and with teachers in a Mongolian way, enriched by the strategies of The Virtues Project that opened up the dialogical space in which such interpretations could flourish. The Virtues Project strategies brought a sense of moral order to the relational connections within the school and also enhanced the opportunity for the individuals to further develop their own moral wisdom.
Interpreting and Reinterpreting, Valuing and Revaluing Virtues

The culture and history embedded in being Mongolian today is a heritage many Mongolians are very proud of and they have great hopes for its re-continued flourishing after the socialist decades of the suppression of their cultural, and history. Yet the hope for the transition years had turned, at least for the teachers in the case study school, into concern that their unique “virtues heritage” was slipping rapidly away, faster than even through the years of socialist ideological rule. This is the general sentiment that prevailed amongst the teachers in the Mongolian school when they first encountered The Virtues Project. Shijirtuya held a very dim view of the way of life the nomad-turned-city-dweller was creating. Most of them “lose their temper,” she said, they are “not calm, not peaceful… not stable, not enthusiastic, and make no integrated decisions, just seeing things for today or tomorrow” (May 2009). “Nowadays children are arrogant and boastful,” said Enkhturleg, claiming, “there is nothing created, nothing done… if a teacher needs something a student will bring it and then get a mark” (May 2009). “Mongolian young people are rude,” bemoaned Tsogzolboo, “not orderly, and waste others’ time. One agrees on an appointment at 1pm but comes at 2pm” (May 2009). Asralt judged the “young people,” who were brought up in the city, to be “very lazy today… modern young people tend to prefer ready-made things and dream about wonderful life… they are too lazy today” (June 2009).

The vitality of Mongol nomadic culture, it seemed to the teachers, was being snuffed out. Ireedui judged that though many people had good marks in high school they did not have standards of “good” in their lives, though she noticed people who lived in the streets of Ulaanbaatar still had these standards of good that were
embedded in the nomadic way of life (May 2009). The opportunities in the city to develop new capacities and talents were enticing, yet in the process the teachers saw the cultural strength of the countryside was waning and people were losing their humanity.

I can see countryside people have more humane character, humane nature. I live in both places; I stay in the countryside in summer time, live in the city in wintertime. In my observation people who live in countryside are more humane but they are not open enough, not mobilizing themselves… this kind life they have in countryside, their inside humaneness is nice and hasn’t broken… city side is a bit flippant, not all of them, just in general they want to make things in easy way, in simple way. But some of them are enormous, creative, eager to develop themselves, and flexible. (Bolormelmii, May 2009)

The teachers, by their own description, were distant from each other and their students for different reasons prior to being introduced to The Virtues Project. There was a distance between teachers and students reminiscent of that distance between city-dwellers and countryside people. The older teachers who were trained during socialism had different methods and attitudes to the younger teachers trained during the transition, the students were different to both because they only knew Mongolia in its transition era. Ethnic differences were also a contributing factor to the distance between people. Much to the disappointment of the younger teachers when they started working in the school, the limited dialogical interaction across the generational, lifestyle and ethnic cultures in the school community was strained and marked by a lack of respect and trust. Asralt was concerned about the change in human relationships and engagements she was encountering with teachers and staff in general in the new Mongolia:
As the society develops, there are many changes happening in the economic situation and people’s relationship in the short period of time. Even there could be some situations when, because of this in the relationship between people, communication goes really wrong, even between people who don’t know each other. Some people come here so angry that they would throw things around here. (Asralt, February 2010)

Embedded in the strained relationships was an increasing plurality of interpretations and valuing of kinds of people, forms of life and ways of engaging with others and the world. The Virtues Project provided dialogical tools to the teachers and students that enabled them to orient and reorient themselves in their expanding, and at times confusing, moral space and moral horizon, to identify where they stood in this new space and on this new horizon, and to voice what they stood for. The strategies of The Virtues Project empowered the work of interpreting and reinterpreting the plurality of moral understandings embedded in the old and new ways of being, living and relating in Mongolia. There was no clear dialogical space for the cultural or personal moral work required to realize the hopes of the transition era for a modern Mongolian identity. The case study teacher narratives about the implementation experience of The Virtues Project strategies tell a story of becoming better selves and having better relationships as they engaged in moral dialogue in everyday moments, gradually transcending the “moral messiness” of the transition era, as Ireedui’s comment demonstrates:

The Virtues Project helps to create very warm, friendly and wonderful relationship between people. It helps people to understand each other. Basically it guides people to the best world. I appreciate that it holds our hands and takes us to the world of wonderfulness. It also helps people to understand oneself.” (Ireedui, February 2010)
During the training and demonstration workshops of the first three months of the case study, it was the more familiar and traditionally loved virtues that were recognised: helpfulness, cooperation, friendliness, orderliness and respect, and resourceful creativity. These are core virtues embedded in the hospitality of the ger and in the nature of nomadic living on the vast open steppe. As teachers and students became familiar with the use of virtues language they recognised other virtues they also loved and admired. Moving further in the Virtues Connection professional development experience, the teachers evaluated the moral strengths and weaknesses in their transition era students. They compared them with self-interpretations of their own student days in the previous era, taught by teachers who were peers of their older teaching colleagues. The disposition of socialist era students they judged as being passive, orderly and obedient, humble and eager to study hard, yet lacking in confidence. Students of today, Ireedui considered, were “more on the bright side than youth of a previous time… have confidence to express themselves and be assertive now” (May 2009). “Modern young people are more enthusiastic about learning and developing themselves, polishing their excellence,” said Bileg-Oyun (June 2009). Virtues language gave dialogical space for strong evaluations about virtues and actions. It inspired, rather than required, the recognition of what was loved and valued, what was worthy and admirable, in the actions of others:

For me, I’m proud of our Virtues Connection meeting because at the meeting we share our opinions, explain about virtues and acknowledging each other’s virtues. It makes me closer to virtues issues and we are becoming closer to each other. (Shijirtuya, March 2009)

Teachers found the virtues-based boundaries strategy could bring attention to the culturally loved qualities to temper and strengthen the unfamiliar good so
admired in the new ways of being now coming into the moral awareness of Mongolians in general. For instance, Bolormelmii saw the capacity for openness, a new good in her estimation, being exemplified in her students, but also saw that they could be “too much open”. This new quality, she found, could be developed strongly rather than making her students vulnerable to unsuspected harms or harming of others. She applied the virtues already loved and understood by herself and her students as Mongolians to create “clear boundaries, where and when I should be open, and then follow that boundary” (May 2009). Enkhturleg understood the cultural qualities of tolerance and respect, admired in the way of life during the Mongol Empire and endemic to the good in Mongol nomadic ethos, and which could temper the “easy anger” and “over determination” of the young (May 2009), creating in them a truly Mongolian identity, as she understood it:

Young people are getting angry easily, yeah, generally. Thus so they need to be tolerant. They suddenly show they are over determined. Generally, I think they have to be tolerant and patient, also they need to respect each other.

Thus so, there are many social and religious influences coming over here and people lose their nature in awful ways. Therefore we should see again from our history, study again our traditional ways. We have to learn from each other I think. (Enkhturleg, May 2009)

The teachers found that others enquiring about and observing their transformations sensed the presence of moral understandings that in some ways seemed deeply familiar and yet in other ways unfamiliar. Bileg-Oyun shared her experience with The Virtues Project in a conversation with two university lecturers who recognized its verisimilitude to their cultural understanding of virtues and morality and also its difference in approach, telling her “how it felt familiar but in
reality was an unfamiliar subject” (June 2009). Enkhturleg later observed that the parents of her students were also making this connection. “Parents have the idea that virtues are connected with Mongolian lifestyle,” she said (April 2010). On hearing Enkhturleg’s comment Bileg-Oyun responded by saying, “If we connect virtues with Mongolian lifestyle it will be near to people. I have an idea to study this” (April 2010). There was a sense that The Virtues Project was bringing vitality and strength to Mongolian culture for the teachers and students, as they understood it in their school environment because they were able to express the good of their culture, and they were able to make sense of the new in the transition era. The virtues language provided the key to opening up the dialogical space for the moral work of interpreting and reinterpreting, valuing and revaluing, in the confusion of moral plurality, the “moral messiness,” of modern Mongolia.

“Virtues are Group Work”

The quest for a modern Mongolian identity, shaped by Mongolians themselves, both draws from their much-loved heritage and also embraces the new. It gives rise to a desire for a cohesive and coherent moral horizon within which the modern Mongolian identity can be situated. Bat-Erdene expressed this need when he shared, “We need a philosophy” (February 2010). Kavelin Popov had written that the philosophy of The Virtues Project was that of enabling people to “focus on the virtues” to “be at their best” (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. xv). The strategies, particularly virtues language, brought the interpretation and application of virtues into the everyday and ordinary lives of people in school communities. The ongoing virtues conversations woven into the dialogues within the school were reframing
moral life within the school, forming close relationships and inspiring the moral becoming of teachers as well as students.

We did not use virtues language with each other. Then, young teachers discussed with each other how we should use the language of virtues acknowledgement and correction with each other, instead of using it only with students. It is a bit difficult to communicate this way with elder teachers, whom we don’t usually socialize with. I guess, they would think, “What is this thing she is talking about?” We admit our mistakes easily when for example, we suggest Ireedui how quickly she was telling her words when teaching and how she had to correct that. We have started observing each other’s lesson too. When we tell each other how enthusiastic we look and how much work it means, it fulfills us, it lifts our spirit up. (Bileg-Oyun, June 2009)

The ongoing virtues language conversations enabled the interpretation of the new ways of being and valuing and the reinterpretation of deeply embedded ways of being and valuing between people with shared and diverse backgrounds. Their dialogical sharing, inextricable from the action and interaction in the human engagements that were being narrated through virtues language, could be seen as a dance of moral ideas and an enactment between multiple dancers always working towards a common moral understanding and responsible to be ever open to revision and refinement.

Moral deliberation in the Mongolian school experience focused on everyday moral problems through virtues correction, virtues-based boundaries and companioning. The narrative structure of virtues language allowed for fuller considerations of actors’ histories, the hermeneutic dimension, in problematic engagements. The negotiation and interpretation between the teachers and students
was ongoing and understood as educative and morally nurturing, and highlighted moral learning as continuous and transformative through life. The accountability towards a common moral life generated through the narrative elaborations in the Virtues Project strategies also brought the Mongolian teachers and students closer together. The unity of community was developing as well as the cohesion and coherence of a common moral life.

However, the Mongolian school experience with The Virtues Project suggests that morality does not only spring from the problematic in human engagements. The strategies of virtues acknowledgements and honouring the spirit did not deal with the problematic, rather they dealt with the appreciative dimension of human engagement. The recognition of virtues in the everyday enabled regular encounters with the good as moral beauty, which transformed ordinary dialogues and engagements into moments of moral learning through the inspiration of moral exemplarity. The previously implicit and unnoticed virtues embedded in human engagements and behaviour were recognised and made explicit in conversation and given meaning that connected everyday interpersonal interaction with a common moral life. In an example given by Ireedui, a female student is inspired by a virtues acknowledgement and as a result works on her own moral transformation:

One time I acknowledged [a student] for showing her organizational skill in the way she led her classmates in the right way. Next time I realized her trying to be trustworthy and asking her classmates to be disciplined. (Ireedui, February 2009)

Bolordusal explained that, before the Virtues Project training, kindness and love were the only virtues she thought of. Being reminded by others of other moral goods that she also loved and admired, and recognizing these in others, inspired her
to incorporate bringing attention to them into her dialogical interaction with her students. This inspired moral action with “enthusiasm and joy” in students.

I think if young people have compassion and respect for others, virtues will spring out of it. Nowadays there is no such thing as respect and helping others. Therefore, if we have these virtues, other virtues will follow them… now I word their virtues out like, “you look very joyful and enthusiastic and if you use your enthusiasm and do your task for teacher and so on,” it makes a difference. When I ask them to go out and close the door, they used to behave more undisciplined. Now they get encouraged for the recognition of their enthusiasm and joy and try to engage in their tasks. (Bolordusal, May 2009)

Bolormelmii reflected on the effect of being inspired by being dialogically aware of moral beauty in each other and their students, in everyday human engagements and in their moral form of life in their school:

By attending The Virtues Project, our team better knew each other, became closer to each other and if something happens we think what virtues we have to show to students, and how to acknowledge them for what virtues. Even students look for virtues acknowledgements from their teachers. We can see that from their eyes. In the school, teachers now better understand each other, are more responsible, more active, and their attitude towards their work has been positively changed. (Bolormelmii, February 2010)

The numerous and continuous activities, both major and everyday, through which the teachers wove the five strategies into the culture of the school, nurtured moral responsibility and accountability amongst the school community members. The teachers and students were also empowered by their “virtues heritage,” as Bolormelmii termed it (April 2010), because they were able to be inspired by it and
be accountable to it. The renewed and revised dialogical culture in the school revived and enhanced negotiation and interpretation of moral meaning that made sense of the past and the present to morally inspire, empower and transform teachers and students for a future common moral life of their making. Enkhturleg stated the expanded philosophical outlook succinctly:

Virtues are not a single person’s work. They are group work. Nowadays I think it’s motivating, time taking and unanimous group work. (Enkhturleg, April 2010)

**Becoming Mongolian: Finding Unity Where There is Diversity**

The teachers’ narratives about the implementation of the strategies of The Virtues Project in their school told stories of teachers becoming better selves and having closer relational webs, of teachers, students and the school community becoming a morally nurturing web, and of creating morally nurturing webs beyond the school. The Mongolian teachers’ narratives have another story that runs in counterpoint to their educational engagement with The Virtues Project. This story points to significant themes in their experience of becoming Mongolians as they engaged with each other to implement the strategies of The Virtues Project. Specifically, six themes could be discerned.

The first theme, a quest for moral order, is set against the backdrop of a multiple millennia-long understanding of cosmological order embedded in Mongolian culture and history. Marking the different historical eras of the Mongol Uls is the progressive introduction of other religious, cultural and ideological horizons. These have been integrated, separated or rejected from the ever-present and
ever-changing moral horizon for the Mongol Uls. The current era has not been characterised as the democratic, capitalist or even liberalist era. It is known as an era of transition. The continuation of flourishing for the Mongol Uls, the hope of transition, has been challenged by the introduction of diverse people, moral valuing, forms of life and ways of engaging with others. The current moral horizon for the Mongol Uls is a confusing moral plurality for many Mongolians, creating tensions and upsetting the balance of life, relationships and identity. The quest for becoming Mongolian in contemporary Mongolia is a quest for moral order, a desire to make sense of the world and to be in a world that makes sense.

The second theme, the ethics of respect, addresses the vulnerability of the being and becoming of the Mongol Uls, in English terms the being and becoming of Mongolians. The expression of respect is a form of power, and power in relationships can flow in different ways depending on the purposes of those in relationship. Forms of respect that are demanded, expected or sought after are self-directed understandings of respect. Respect demanded or expected from others and not given in return, which is characteristic of exploitative and manipulative power, is disempowering and destructive of relationships. Competition for the respect of others seeks to polarize groups and is capable of creating tensions and divisions even in society. The practice of respect, concern, care and love for others has been identified by Charles Taylor (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 25) as a key dimension in the moral landscape of human beings. It is because of the vulnerability of being human that respect between people seeking to survive and flourish together is required. A lack of respect can be the cause of harm to a person. Some moral horizons, or frameworks, interpret respect inwardly towards the self or a particular group. It can imply a vulnerability to harm for those who are not included in the circle of respect. The Mongolian teachers
experienced respect in the nurturative and integrative flow of power in relationships as an embedded dynamic within the new practice of virtues language. Respect was given because of another axis Charles Taylor (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 25) identified in human moral landscapes, namely the recognition of dignity, nobility, worthiness or moral beauty in others. It was not enough for this kind of respect to be embedded in the moral horizons of the Mongolian teachers. The nurturative and integrative dimensions of respect also needed to be expressed in the dialogical engagements to facilitate the flourishing of persons and the community. The very practice of respect that is outwardly focused or other-directed, which recognizes in the other what is loved and valued, is in itself worthy of respect from others. An empowering form of respect causes unity, even when there is a diversity of peoples, ideas and ways of being.

The third theme, that of Mongolians being materially embodied and relationally embedded in the ger, highlights the deep valuing of iluu oir dotno and khot ail in the cultural and historical moral horizon of the Mongol Uls. Achieving an atmosphere within a ger that is friendly, loving, respectful and hospitable to visitors, is viewed as a worthy pursuit. The two poles that hold up the ger, representing the husband and wife of the ail ger, are a unifying symbol in the way they can potentially create the space for sharing ideas, human growth and flourishing, and for strong bonds between people around the hearth. Khot ail is the unity between groups of people who cooperate together for the common good, though they may not be family, and may not be equals in wealth or role in society. Diversity is key to khot ail for the community to function well and flourish together. Khot ail does not require unity; it is a situation of unity. People who help each other and cooperate together, who are respectful of one another and seek to understand each other, though they
may not entirely agree with each other, are a community that has one life and one 

mind; *Khot ail’iin ami neg. Saakhalt ailiin sanaa neg*. People working on a common 
goal are united despite their diversity.

The fourth theme, the enriched Mongol nomadic moral dimensions for 

becoming Mongolian, reflects the contribution of *yos* and *surtakhuan* to the 

flourishing of moral being, the moral form of life and moral engagement. These, and 

possibly other, cultural strategies that shape and define Mongolian values have an 

ultimate purpose of creating cohesiveness and unity amongst the Mongol Uls. *Yos* is 

the common valuing framework for Mongol nomadic society in the form of customs 

and rules. The enactment of *yos* is subject to the purposes and skills of the people 

engaging with each other, the environment and the celestial realm. People admired 

for their skills in *yos* are those who bring about unity and peace between people with 

diverse intentions, strangers, or at times of disruption. *Surtakhuan* is the cultural 

interpretation of the development of a personal ethics. Essential to the Mongol 

nomadic understanding is the power of the *shavi* (student) to choose one or many 

*bagshi* (teacher) to learn moral ways of being, engaging and living, thereby 

transforming ordinary lives into moral exemplarity. Virtues language from The 

Virtues Project strengthened *surtakhuan* by opening up the dialogical moral space 

between people. The action of *surtakhuan* became more frequent and expanded to 

transforming aspects of every person’s ways of being, engaging and living into moral 

exemplarity. The sayings and doings of all could be interpreted in terms of virtues 

intentions, transforming the ordinary into an example of moral beauty, that which is 

valued and loved. In this way, diversity was not a cause for estrangement between 

people; it was a cause for enriching the moral exemplarity available. Diverse 

interpretations about the good became a cause for unity.
Interpreting and reinterpreting, valuing and revaluing virtues, is the fifth theme and it highlights another contribution of virtues language to becoming Mongolian. Teachers reinterpreted the characteristic of student moral being in the socialist and transition eras in virtues language terms, seeing diversity as each practicing different constellations of virtues with different results in ways of living and engaging. They discerned moral strengths and weaknesses in both, situated both in context and interpreted consequences over time. They were also able to view the moral dimension of individual students in this same way. In their deliberations, the teachers drew on their embedded cultural valuing, their narrative interpretations of their own experience and their contact with diverse possibilities for good today, and the school community’s voiced and unvoiced common understandings of the good. They were also able to devise transformative strategies for student moral learning using the strategies of The Virtues Project, particularly virtues language and virtues based boundaries. The use of virtues language by teachers and students created a dynamic of dialogical and relational interpretation and reinterpretation, valuing and revaluing of virtues in the context of everyday personal and community life. This is a continuous negotiation of diversity with diverse interpretations. The teachers’ and students’ experience of using virtues language was the creation of close relationships that could be characterised as people that are accountable to each other through the common values they are exploring, experiencing and promoting together. Unity experienced as inclusive and as creating meaning together became the cause of moral flourishing of each person and their community.

The sixth theme, that “virtues are group work”, illuminates the teachers’ experience of becoming Mongolian through relational dialogues marked by the ethics of integrative power. Morality was experienced from both problematic and
appreciative dimensions, the latter proving to be most powerful in creating encounters with the good, or moral beauty, to inspire transformation in being, living and engaging with others. The work of the group came to be understood as reinterpreting “virtues heritage” in the contemporary context to interpret the moral plurality entering into their moral horizons in today’s Mongolia. Finding unity involves seeking a unity between the values of an embedded past with the diversity of values that have now emerged in the present age of transition.

Summary

The Virtues Project displayed qualities of cross-cultural coherence in the Mongolian teachers’ experience of adopting and implementing it in their school. The practice of The Virtues Project enabled the Mongolian teachers and students to reconnect with the deeply embedded valuing and ways of being together in close relationship that have resonated with and reflected their Mongol nomadic past. The Virtues Project is not without its own vision of a moral way of being together. The Virtues Project’s proposition that virtues run through all sacred texts and cultural traditions is reflective of a belief that there is an underlying elemental moral unity in the moral horizons of different religions and cultures. The Mongolian experience has been that the type of relational engagements that the strategies of The Virtues Project encourage has had the effect of building unity between people.

This story has also highlighted a deeply embedded love for unity in the moral horizons of the Mongolian teachers and students as expressed in the culturally and enduring relational phenomena of oir dotna and khot ail of the Mongol nomads. The modern Mongolian is not without moral resources to realise the quest for a coherent
modern Mongolian identity in the transition era’s space of moral plurality. A key narrative finding in this chapter is that the deeper dialogue created within the school through the use of The Virtues Project strategies has helped to illuminate what unity in diversity might mean in the modern Mongolian context.

There were six integrated and overlapping themes of finding unity where there is diversity recognised in the Mongolian school’s encounter with The Virtues Project. First, the quest for becoming Mongolian in contemporary Mongolia is a quest for moral order, a desire to make sense of the moral plurality in the world and to be in a world that makes sense. Second, the narrated experience of the Mongolian teachers highlighted that respectful engagement, a condition of oir dotna, close communication and relationship, causes unity, even when there is a diversity of peoples, ideas and ways of being. Third, people working towards a common goal become united despite their diversity, a condition of khot ail, close neighbours as family. Fourth, diverse interpretations about the good that may emerge in dialogical relationships in everyday being, living and relating can become a cause for unity. Fifth, the moral unity that comes from interpreting and reinterpreting, valuing and revaluing virtues together, is inclusive and creative of meaning together, and becomes the source of moral flourishing of each person and their community. Sixth, finding true unity involves seeking a unity between the values of an embedded past and the diversity of values that have now emerged in the present age of transition.
Chapter 9: Conclusions

Introduction

The ontological and ethical account explored in this study is founded on the notion that the moral form of life and the nature of the self have universal features. Charles Taylor’s account of these universal features is a broader account of the ethical and the ontological, and of morality and moral thinking. His notions have informed this thesis that explores the three research questions posed in Chapter One. This chapter concludes this exploration with a brief review chapters and discusses some pertinent limitations of the study. It addresses some of the practical implications of the reflections resulting from these explorations and, lastly, puts forward recommendations for further research.

Revisiting the Research Questions

Ontological and Ethical Coherence

There was significant resonance between The Virtues Project and the moral form of life as articulated in the Taylorean account. The ontological and ethical exploration of The Virtues Project gave a strong indication that its strategies had coherence for the moral flourishing of persons and communities.

The Virtues Project assumes the self as relationally embedded when interpreting virtues understandings in materially embodied and dialogical
engagement. Virtues language is a narrative tool that gives plausibility to moral interpretations using the irreducible moral elements of virtues. Practicing and acknowledging virtues bring purpose and meaning to a life and are a cause for moral flourishing and overcoming vulnerabilities.

Virtues are elemental to our moral form of life in the way we conceptualise respect for others, pursue a meaningful life and sense our own dignity. Strong evaluations are expressed in virtues terms in the Virtues Project’s strategies, which assist in building more coherent moral horizons based on respect for others, for individuals and social practices. Engrossment in the virtues practice of others stimulates internal practical reasoning to more clearly understand virtues. Different moral sources make virtues morally beautiful to us, opening up a doorway to a fusion of moral horizons. Fusion in the midst of diverse moral interpretations occurs through plausible narrative understandings about virtues in the exchange between virtues language and practice. The Virtues Project acknowledges the diverse sacred texts and cultural traditions as the moral sources of virtues. However, it does not explore or articulate them and leaves individuals and communities to use their own initiative to connect with the moral source that makes the virtues morally beautiful to them.

The nature of moral engagement The Virtues Project fosters in a school context is primarily a nurturative form of power when teachers use the strategies for students. This transforms into an expressive-collaborative space of integrative power when teachers use the strategies with each other. Virtues language keeps moral space open with empowering language to prevent the development of exploitative violence in relationships. The expressive collaborative space allows virtues understandings to be negotiated and, through love for the moral beauty of virtues, holds each person
accountable to practicing them. The strategies do not coerce, they invite teachers and students to cultivate virtues through narrated recognition of virtues in practice, and through recognising the moral beauty within these encounters.

Virtues are a doorway to a fusion of horizons in cross-cultural settings, although this may not be so easily achieved due to limited references to the diverse moral sources of its virtues accounts. The diverse historical and cultural moral sources a person or community might draw on are in the tacit background of the interpretive work that goes on in virtues language and practice. There is no requirement to articulate these moral sources or the ontological claims from which love for the virtues springs, nor does The Virtues Project articulate its own exploration of its moral sources beyond acknowledgement. The five strategies alone may not enable people to bridge the ontological divides in cross-cultural contexts. The realm in which The Virtues Project operates is at the basic universal stage of cultivating virtues to respect others, live a meaningful life and develop a sense of personal and community dignity, through the simple dialogical tool of acknowledging the virtues practice of others.

The Virtues Project has an ontological and ethical capacity to adapt to diverse cultural contexts. However, though the moral sources of the virtues are acknowledged, their historical and cultural embeddedness and the retrieval of the link to their moral sources remain unarticulated. This may not allow the more complex cross-cultural dialogues on virtues to occur.

**Educational Coherence**

The realisation of The Virtues Project in a school context had a narrative reasonableness as a moral education program when experienced by one group of
teachers implementing it in their school, giving it an educational coherence in at least this one situation. The teacher narratives told a story of engaged and embodied experiences as selves, relationships and community.

The teachers of a Mongolian school entered into engagement with The Virtues Project. Having experienced a diminishing love for teaching, the younger teachers were initially attracted to The Virtues Project on a personal level. When receiving virtues acknowledgements from others, even the stilted efforts of initiates to this strategy, the teachers discovered that they were indeed practicing virtues. This motivated the younger teachers to continue beyond the initial training.

The teachers found their enthusiasm for teaching returning as they practiced the virtues language with each other. Their involvement in extracurricular student workshops, focused on virtues language and teachable moments, encouraged them to continue this kind of engagement in their relationships with students in and out of lesson time. The teachers remarked on their sense of flourishing as teachers and selves when they noticed they were treating their students with greater care and respect. As the dialogical engagements between teachers and students became fluent with virtues language, the teachers reported they had begun experiencing warmth and closeness with each other and their students. At first they were engaged in virtues language for students, using nurturative power, but quickly became engaged with students, using integrative power. Virtues language was the initial strategy the teachers used to create encounters with moral beauty and through which they experienced moral transformation in themselves and their students.

They instituted “virtues lessons” to involve more students in virtues language practice. The increased engagement in moral education through virtues language raised issues for the teachers. They requested further training to increase their
knowledge and skills in implementing the remaining strategies. Out of this training they created plans for more systematic action in training other teachers in their school and increasing student engagement with The Virtues Project strategies. The school culture began to change and achieved citywide recognition as a child-centred school. The teachers broadened their focus as they maintained the flourishing activities in their school, increasing their transformative generosity to include virtues language training for parents of their students, student teachers in their school, family members, orphans, juvenile offenders and factory workers. Finally, they became engaged in training other teachers and other schools in all the strategies, establishing The Virtues Project as an emerging social practice in Mongolia.

Moral being and becoming in this school’s moral education engagement with The Virtues Project involved far more than the cognitive, behavioural and affective moral development of students. The articulation of the school’s meta-narrative told a story of moral flourishing of teacher selves and their relationships with each other and their students, expanding further to include the school community. Moral education that involved the five strategies of The Virtues Project was more than a lesson-based program. It took moral education into the dialogical relationships between teachers and students. Its effect was the transformation of exploitative, manipulative and weakly nurturative relationships into strong nurturative power emanating from teachers and integrative power between teachers and also with students. The Virtues Project strategies were tools that created a web of interlocution that was expressive-collaborative in nature and increased encounters with moral beauty through virtues acknowledgements of virtues practice.
Cross-Cultural Coherence

The Virtues Project, though developed in a North American context, resonated with the Mongolian school located in a dissimilar culture and history. The cross-cultural coherence of The Virtues Project was explored through teacher narratives focused on their conceptualization and actualization of it within their Mongolian cultural context. The Mongolians engaging with the virtues through The Virtues Project strategies reconnected with deeply embedded ways of valuing and being together. Their growth towards close relationship and a flourishing sense of community resonated with, and reflected, their Mongol nomadic past.

The Virtues Project’s vision of collaborative virtues practice and acknowledgement enhancing the moral life of a person and their community was realised by the teachers in their Mongolian context. They experienced the deeply loved relational ways of being, known since the Mongol nomadic times as *oir dotna*, close communication/relationship, and *khot ail*, neighbours with one mind and one heart. The teachers, as modern Mongolians, drew on their historically and culturally embedded moral resources to advance their quest for a modern Mongolian identity in an era of “messy” moral plurality.

Contrapuntal voices in the Mongolian teacher narratives were heard after the retrieval of their embeddedness in history and culture, the exploration of their material embodiment and the articulation of moral sources and moral horizons. A cross-cultural dialogue was heard in the contrapuntal voices of the narratives. Historical and cultural moral voices were in a web of interlocution with the Virtues Project’s implicit and articulated moral understandings and the teachers’ implementation experiences.
Six integrated and overlapping themes, focused on finding unity and order in the confusing moral topography, were featured in the contrapuntal cross-cultural dialogue. First, there is the quest for moral coherence and order in a Mongolian moral horizon becoming increasingly pluralistic with foreign moral goods. Second is the nature of respectful engagement of oir dotna when diverse peoples, ideas and ways of being come into direct contact. Third is the unity of purpose and being together that the conditions of khot ail have the potential to achieve. Fourth is the expressive-collaborative sharing of diverse interpretations about the good that enable the sharing of moral valuing. Fifth is that the interpreting and reinterpreting, valuing and revaluing of virtues together is a source for moral flourishing of persons and their community. Finally, the unity of diverse people and ways of life involves seeking a narrative coherence between historically and culturally embedded moral understandings and the diversity of modern moral understandings.

**Some Views in Contemporary Moral Education**

The modernity project was animated by a radically new ontological notion that right moral action was determined by the rational decision-making process of a mind disengaged from the physical, social and temporal world (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 175). The notion of “external, non-culture descriptions of right conduct to guide moral life” is the tacit background to the economic and technological progress of modern nations and cities (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 81). It is the ontological and ethical view that transformed the content and method to be what contemporary moral education is today. The powerful social forces that it set in motion have tipped the balance from moral to secular education in school curricula over the last two centuries. Hunter
observes that modernist assumptions perceive moral experience as “receiving facts about an objective world, deducing what is right to do, and then acting (or failing to act) on that basis” (Hunter, 2000, p. 81). However, Howard, Berkowitz and Schussler claim that moral education “comes with the territory of teaching and schooling” and moral educators will always seek better ways “to help students to know, care about, and do the right thing” [emphasis added] (Howard et al., 2004, p. 210).

Haste challenges the dominance of conceptions of moral autonomy and its background assumptions about “self-society and self-other relations” in Western philosophical discourse (Haste, 2008, p. 385). She refers to Charles Taylor’s work and concludes that dialogical dimensions of human interactions have a greater role in morality than rationalist models have allowed for, and that shared cultural narratives “provide a normative context for actions, values and relationships” (Haste, 2008, p. 385). M. J. Taylor points to the need to give “serious recognition to cultural diversity and the cultural situatedness of morality,” which have been occluded in moral development research and moral education practice (M. J. Taylor, 2008, p. 131). Cross-cultural dialogue, she argues, could be the biggest challenge for moral education (M. J. Taylor, 2008, p. 134). Narvaez comments that a range of approaches from philosophical to psychological and application research hold intriguing directions that will have relevance for moral education (Narvaez, 2013, pp. 4-5). She suggests expanding the moral education research arena to consider the cultural interpretations of little known and very different societies to the dominant cultures in the world today, and exploring the human dimensions of moral foundations that are not accessible through prevalent scientific methods (Narvaez, 2013, p. 8).

These sentiments take note of Noddings’ work in care ethics and the nature of the relational self in moral education (Noddings, 2002a). They also reflect the
intuition Humphrey expresses as an anthropologist of moralities, that the attempts to understand unfamiliar cultures, such as the “moral world of the Mongols,” can “illuminate the constructions of morality more generally” (Humphrey, 1997, p. 26).

The hegemonic view of international social forces about the self and the moral form of life is dissimilar to diverse moral views that are embedded in the different cultures and histories that they strongly influence.

Taylor’s broader account of moral life goes beyond “what it is right to do” to encompass “who it is good to be”. His philosophical anthropological view sees an interpretive, relationally embedded and materially embodied self. Taylor’s notions of the self and the moral form of life have informed this exploration of The Virtues Project and its implementation in a Mongolian school. The exploration of its ontological and ethical resonance with the Tayloren frame work revealed an understanding of the self as interpretive and relational. Its tacit understanding of the moral form of life is an expressive-collaborative engagement with virtues practice and interpretive acknowledgement. The teacher narratives of their experience with its implementation told a school story of moral flourishing for selves, relationships and community for teachers and students, indicating an educational coherence in The Virtues Project. The cross-cultural inquiry, prefaced by an historical and cultural retrieval of Mongolian moral sources, heard a cross-cultural dialogue embedded in the Mongolian teacher narratives between the Mongolian sources and The Virtues Project. Its cross-cultural coherence in the Mongolian school context may have uncovered the deeper attractiveness of The Virtues Project. Its strategies engage with the virtues across all three of Taylor’s axes of moral thinking, which operate at the basic universal level of the human experience of moral life.
The exploration in this thesis has provided an opportunity for some reflections about the articulation of historical and cultural embeddedness of moral thinking in moral education research, the nature of being and becoming in moral life, and the importance of encounters with moral beauty for moral identity.

Articulations of Moral Horizons and Moral Sources in Moral Education Research

Moral horizons are ever present for us. They form the tacit background that underpins our moral responses and the nature of our moral engagements (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 9). There are times when part of this tacit background is brought into our foreground, perhaps due to a moral predicament or when meeting diverse interpretations in dialogue. Taylor explains that moral goods become ours because some kind of articulation, which involves practical reason, has occurred for us to find them worthy of our love and admiration (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 91). A deeper kind of articulation of what lies in our background understandings can connect us with the moral source of the goods we find morally beautiful, and can increase the power of both the moral source and the moral goods that guide our lives and interactions (Abbey, 2000, p. 47; C. Taylor, 1989, p. 92).

Our moral goods, whether in the tacit background or in our conscious foreground, are deeply embedded in our history and culture, and this is where we also find our moral sources. Their articulation can be a complex and difficult task. The historical retrieval to find the origins and development of current moral outlooks is an exploration of express beliefs and philosophical theories as well as attitudes, as Taylor’s retrieval of Western moral sources shows (C. Taylor, 1989, 2007). Taylor’s purpose in undertaking his highly complex historical retrieval for sources of the
Western modern self is to “open out by this study a new understanding of ourselves and of our deepest moral allegiances” (C. Taylor, 1989, pp. 104-105).

Articulation, explains Isaacs, allows a “bottom up approach that acknowledges the basis of human morality in the richness and complexity of human lives and the human condition,” providing a correction to the “top-down account of the moral based solely on rational considerations and arguments” (Isaacs, 2009b, p. 7). Taylor’s account of the ontological and ethical in the moral form of life “invites us to see moral values and moral engagements as resonating with a phenomenological account of what it is to be human” (Isaacs, 2009b, p. 12). Articulation in moral theorizing develops “a deeper shared understanding of the diverse moral goods that we may hold as members of our society” because the plurality of goods can be laid open to rational clarification and appraisal, and be given the opportunity for reflective appreciation (Isaacs, 2009b, p. 7).

The ontological and ethical exploration of The Virtues Project in this thesis was an articulated way of engaging with moral education, and it uncovered an implicit view of the self as interpretive, relationally embedded and materially embodied. This explains, at least in part, its attractiveness to diverse people because this view is close to the living reality of human experience, according to the Tayloren account. Exploring its claim that the virtues cause moral flourishing in persons and communities and bring meaning and purpose to life uncovered its understanding of the essence of moral life as virtues practice and acknowledgement. Moral life that focuses on virtues practice and acknowledgement could have such an impact because it links in with the internal practical reasoning that goes on in interpretive selves and in the background of dialogical engagements between interpretive selves.
The exploration exposed the kind of moral engagement fostered through the Virtues Project strategies as one that keeps moral space open in an expressive-collaborative mode and stimulates the flow of nurturative and integrative power in relationships. The uncovering of this feature counters criticism levelled at The Virtues Project that hint at potential for a hidden religious agenda to indoctrinate or proselytize. The finding that the Virtues Project strategies open an expressive-collaborative moral space indicates that the particular beliefs and values of each person are respected and join in with others in a negotiation for moral understanding in a community that may draw on different moral sources. There was no Bahá’í influence or marked effect apparent in this case study. The capacity for The Virtues Project to respect diverse moral sources, and therefore to be able to act as a door to cross-cultural dialogue, is because of the primacy it gives the virtues as being morally beautiful from the perspective of multiple moral sources. The Virtues Project implicitly understands the virtues as being elemental to a basic universal morality, which Taylor has identified as respect for others, the pursuit of a meaningful life and having a sense of personal and community dignity (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 15).

In the exploration of the educational coherence of The Virtues Project, the teachers implementing it in their school found that moral education expanded into their dialogical relationships with each other and their students. They channelled nurturative power for students, and integrative power with each other and then with students also. A moral space was opened up that was expressive-collaborative and contained educative and transformative encounters with moral beauty in the nexus between virtues practice and virtues acknowledgement. The narrative articulation of

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33 This refers to the discussion in the literature review in Chapter Two regarding the critique of the Virtues Project’s connection to the Bahá’í Faith (Curriculum Corporation Department of Education, 2003; Hill, 2012; Howard et al., 2004).
the school’s experience with The Virtues Project is consistent with the articulation of the Virtues Project’s ontological and ethical dimension. The narrative inquiry of the exploration of the cross-cultural coherence of The Virtues Project in this study required an articulation of Mongolian moral goods and moral sources. This opened up new understandings about the modern Mongolian and identified historically and culturally embedded contrapuntal voices that were present in the Mongolian teacher narratives. It is interesting to note that The Virtues Project became a portal for the realisation of one teacher to see that Mongolia had a “virtues heritage,” which is an implicit understanding that her and her colleagues’ moral thinking was historically and culturally embedded.

Taylor claims that “as long as we leave Western notions of identity unexamined, we will fail to see how other cultures differ and how this difference crucially conditions the way in which they integrate the truly universal features of modernity” (C. Taylor, 1999, p. 161). Articulating the tacit backgrounds of the ethical orientations present in moral horizons makes it possible to “rationally argue about and to sift ontological claims” (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 8). He warns that “not just any articulation will do,” that only those articulations that make a moral source “plain and evident, in all its inherent force, its capacity to inspire our love, respect, or allegiance” will bring the source close (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 96). The ontological and ethical exploration of The Virtues Project, the narrative articulation of the school’s experience through a narrative inquiry with teachers, and the articulation of Mongolian moral sources and the contrapuntal cross-cultural dialogue heard in the Mongolian teachers’ narratives have been an exploration into the power of Taylor’s kind of articulation for moral education discourse.
Moral Being and Becoming

Moral flourishing, becoming better people and communities, is the goal of moral education. However, moral education in schools is more typically conceived of as a curriculum subject, if it is considered at all. The debate about whether moral education should be included in schools has long been about whether it deserves a place in the curriculum, which, if it passes this hurdle, then leads to issues about overcrowded school timetables. Yet, as this exploration has highlighted, moral education is not merely a curriculum subject. Schools are richly endowed with multiple ethical orientations and, although sometimes problematic, these moral horizons are inescapable. The inescapable nature of moral horizons in all walks of life, and therefore in all human engagements, means that even though an education system or school may not “do” moral education, it still has a moral horizon in which some kind of moral education is going on. Schooling itself is a moral engagement and therefore a moral education, even if by default and in ignorance of the fact.

The Virtues Project does not present a lesson-based curriculum but rather a strategy-based approach. Its strategies hinge on the virtues language strategy, and its implementation in the Mongolian school caused moral education to permeate into relational dialogues, both within, and outside of lesson times. As one teacher reflected, virtues are group work. Moral flourishing, in the Mongolian teachers’ experience, was located in relationship.

The nature of power within the school relationships became transformed as more teachers and students engaged in virtues language with each other. School relationships became more frequently characterised by nurturative and integrative power as the teachers became more involved with the implementation of The Virtues
An Exploration of The Virtues Project

Empowered by the positive power focused on the moral flourishing of the other, the teachers felt that they could address the issues in the school that had been causing them to lose their love for teaching. They addressed those efforts to disable their freedom and dignity, and the exposure to harm that they and their students were experiencing in the school, by focusing the nurturative strategies of The Virtues Project on the exploitative and manipulative other. The strategies focused the school culture and relationships on care for the other and a collaborative commitment to empower each other to become better selves.

The exploration of the cross-cultural engagement of the Mongolian school with The Virtues Project identified six themes in a contrapuntal cross-cultural dialogue. A quest for moral order was discernible in the Mongolian experience, a quest to make sense of moral plurality. The space for making sense of the moral plurality was kept open because of the respectful, compassionate, caring and loving engagement of teachers and students, who experienced closer connection in their relationships with each other as a result. Their respectful engagement was characterised by nurturative and integrative power that empowered each one to flourish and become respected by, and be respectful of others, giving them a sense of being united. The diverse interpretations about virtues in practice, how moral beauty was perceived in action, emerged in the teachers’ and students’ dialogical relationships in their everyday being, living and relating, further enhancing the experience of unity. The interpreting and reinterpreting, valuing and revaluing of virtues going on in the school was an inclusive experience in which meaning was created and refined together, becoming a source of moral flourishing for each person and the community. Articulating the Mongolian school’s engagement with The Virtues Project also uncovered the values of an embedded past and the diversity of values that have emerged in the present. It
highlighted that approaching true unity in moral understandings and in relationships involved seeking unity within the plurality that marks Mongolia’s moral horizon in the modern context.

Moral education is thus a web of dialoguers in relationship that are focused on a common goal: to achieve greater unity with and within their diversity. In moral education contexts where there is a diversity of dialogical relationships there will almost certainly be diverse interpretations about the good, which can become a cause for unity when dialogical relationships are sites of nurturative and integrative power. Inclusive and creative moral education approaches that allow for the interpreting and reinterpreting, valuing and revaluing of virtues together in dialogue can become the cause of moral flourishing for each person and their community. Moral education that fosters unity in diversity is an expressive-collaborative space for morality (Walker, 2007, p. 66). The experience of moral education is enhanced when it seeks to unify the embedded past with the diversity on the moral horizons of the present through respectful negotiation and accountability in a school community that interacts together in a common pursuit of unfolding moral understanding and practice.

The three axes of moral thinking identified in the Tayloreal framework, that is, our respect for others, our sense of dignity and the meaningfulness of a full life (Taylor, 1989 p.15), forms a basis for recognising what is universal in human morality. The Virtues Project had these axes of moral thinking embedded in its principles and strategies. Its assumptions about the nature of the self and the moral form of life are resonant with Taylor’s broader phenomenological view of morality. Particularly significant is the strong presence in the strategies of the universal features—interpretation, language, narrative and dialogical engagement—that are
consistent with Taylor’s ontological and ethical account. The virtues language strategy, in particular, gave the teachers and students simple, ordinary and everyday interpretive dialogical access into the space of moral and spiritual questions that had largely been ignored in the school prior to its implementation, enabling them to encounter the good as moral beauty.

We are moral beings who seek a moral life that is meaningful and morally beautiful to us, and for whom engagement with others must flow with positive nurturing and integrative power for it to be the cause of flourishing, of moral being and becoming. Being constantly engaged in an expressive-collaborative morality means we respectfully engage with, and are accountable to, each other to constantly collaborate in our negotiations We are accountable for moral meaning and its expression in our ways of living and engaging. Diversity is not a hindrance to collaborative unity; it is the inspiration for flourishing in such moral engagement. As M. J. Taylor cautioned,

above all, moral education must not just be about the abstract and theoretical. It has to be about lived morality, individual and social wellbeing and flourishing, how we live our lives and how we can make the world a better place. (M. J. Taylor, 2008, p. 133)

*Moral Beauty*

Encounters with the good in the space of moral and spiritual issues are encounters with moral beauty, because that which is considered worthy, and is loved and admired, appears beautiful. From a phenomenological philosophical perspective, encounters with moral beauty strengthen allegiances to moral sources and the goods underpinned by them that we find worthy of our love and respect (Abbey, 2000, p.
Diessner et al. found that people who engage with moral beauty appear to have more “moral-ly beautiful” personalities than those who do not, and that “moral beauty appears to be uniquely related to love of, and connectedness to, others” (Diessner, Iyer, Smith, & Haidt, 2013, p. 160). It is interesting to note that Diessner et al. remember that Aristotle viewed the telos of virtues is moral beauty (Diessner et al., 2013, p. 139). The Virtues Project strategies generated multiple encounters with moral beauty in relationship for the teachers and their students in the Mongolian school. As the dialogical engagements in the school increasingly focused on the recognition of virtues in practice, the teachers experienced themselves and their students being and becoming morally beautiful people. The encounters with moral beauty were relationally embedded and authentically tied to the context of the engagement within which the dialogue of recognition of the virtues took place.

The power of virtues language is that it generates encounters with moral beauty in the everyday moments. It appears that virtues language, as it becomes part of the culture of relational engagements, enhances the flourishing of morally beautiful people. This is similar to what is envisioned by Noddings in the act of confirmation in which “we recognize something admirable, or at least acceptable, struggling to emerge in each person we encounter” (Noddings, 2007, p. 229). Both The Virtues Project and Noddings’ care ethics view the development of caring communities as an outcome of the confirmation and acknowledgement of that which is worthy and admirable in people (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, pp. 83-94; Noddings, 2002b, p. 103). Noddings goes further to suggest that only people in caring communities can achieve “authentic human liberation and social justice” (Noddings, 2002b, p. 103).

Giving voice to the moral beauty we recognise in others is a loving and caring act that is not without its influence on our sense of self. The self always exists in
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relation to others and is authored in conversations with many others. The self flourishes in a community of dialoguers giving voice to moral beauty.

**Limitations to This Research**

There are a number of limitations in this research exploring The Virtues Project. Firstly, only a limited number of teacher narratives were used in the case study inquiry. A fuller study would necessitate an engagement with the students, those who had the opportunity to engage with the teachers who were actively implementing the strategies. Exploring the positive endorsement and strong commitment through the narratives of these students, rather than through the teacher narratives, would have greatly enhanced this study. The same could be said of their parents who became engaged through their children’s teachers. An engagement with the older teachers, at first unwilling to commit their energies to further training, who came into contact with the younger teachers skilled in the strategies, would also have added a rich dimension to the exploration of The Virtues Project in their school. There was strong evidence provided by the teachers and positive indications from the director that education ministry administrators had enriching experiences with The Virtues Project. Their narratives of their first impressions on hearing what was going on in the school and then as a result of observing the younger teachers’ lessons and hearing their reflections would have added another rich dimension. However, the scope of the research did not allow the inclusion of all these possible narratives.

Another limitation is that this is only one school experience in only one culture, albeit a very different culture to that of the founders and early beginnings of The Virtues Project. It was, significantly, a positive experience, but it cannot be argued
that from this one study a claim can be made for how it will be received and implemented in other schools, even in Mongolia. It is possible that the enhancement of moral experience and the themes of developing unity in diversity could be experienced in different ways, or not at all.

A possible third limitation arises out of the lack of familiarity with the contrapuntal voices in Mongolian narratives on my part. Though the articulation of Mongolian being in this study was revealing and helpful to identify that a contrapuntal cross-cultural dialogue was going on and that some themes of this dialogue were discernable, it had its own limitations. It could only draw on English-speaking historical, anthropological and ethnographic literature relating to Mongolia’s history and culture. These fields are still considered to be emergent. There is a growing body of literature written in Mongolian that would greatly enrich this kind of articulation. The opportunities that are becoming available as historical records from previous realms around, and at one time within, the sphere of the Mongol Uls will fill in huge gaps and add interesting insights to the historical and cultural retrieval of Mongolia’s moral sources and moral horizons. However, to include all of this would also have gone beyond the scope of this research.

Finally, it is important to note that this thesis accepts Taylor’s account of the moral form of life as coherent and defensible. Taylor’s account is used as the interpretive standard for answering the three key questions, and as such places a limitation on this study. It does not critique Taylor’s account, nor does it explore the research questions from alternative philosophical approaches to our understanding of the moral form of life. Taylor's account provides a foundational anchor to the critical work in this thesis.
Practical Implications and Recommendations for Further Research

A cross-cultural dialogue between the Mongolian teachers with The Virtues Project did occur, but this was discernable to the narrative inquirer only through a narrative analysis that exposed the contrapuntal dimension in which it occurred. Without the articulation of Mongolian historical and cultural moral horizons and moral sources and the articulation of The Virtues Project’s ontological and ethical dimensions, this cross-cultural dialogue would have remained in the tacit background of the teachers’ moral awareness. The benefit of its articulation may have implications for the Mongolian teachers themselves, and perhaps for Mongolians in general. It may enter into the moral horizons of culturally different others because, by its articulation, it has become available. Only further research conducted on various responses to the contrapuntal cross-cultural dialogue articulated in the Mongolian school’s experience with The Virtues Project might bring this to light.

There is no articulation of the historical and cultural retrieval of moral sources or the ontological claims from which love for the virtues springs in The Virtues Project. It does provide an expressive-collaborative space for individuals and communities to use their own initiative to connect with the moral source that make the virtues morally beautiful to them. This may not be sufficient to propel moral understanding forward in cross-cultural contexts to achieve a foundation for at least informed toleration of moral differences as Isaacs sees could result from articulation (Isaacs, 2009b, p. 7).

The articulation and then narrative analysis of Mongolian being and becoming demonstrates there is a richness that was out of my normal view, perhaps also for the
Mongolian teachers whose awareness appeared to be in the tacit background. The early cross-cultural engagement of the emergent strategy concepts of the founders with a First Nations group in northern Canada strongly influenced the strategies as they are today in The Virtues Project. The articulation was of the kind that arose in experiential and reflective dialogue between the founders and the First Nations community group. Now, some two decades after that enriching cross-cultural engagement, there seems to be little enriching cross-cultural exchange to advance The Virtues Project. Without the kind of articulation that Taylor endorses of diverse historical and cultural moral sources of cultural communities, the contrapuntal cross-cultural dialogues may go unarticulated. The Virtues Project may be losing enriching opportunities for itself, for those cultural others who engage with it and for moral education in general.

Engaging in the kind of articulations suggested here, The Virtues Project would be carrying out the kind of practical reason Taylor suggests for cross-cultural moral engagements (Abbey, 2000, pp. 166-167). Of the four “intellectual virtues” Abbey notes are presupposed in Taylor’s practical reason (Abbey, 2000, p. 163), only the willingness to know the other appears strongly in The Virtues Project strategies, particularly virtues language. Virtues language could be expanded to the more complex kind of dialogue of articulation and practical reason. This could take place to varying degrees in school situations, and could lead to the kind of scholarly research Taylor undertakes. It would require deliberate application of the remaining intellectual virtues of not dismissing the strange, respecting difference, openness to change and courageous questioning of personal assumptions—virtues which The Virtues Project values.
The Virtues Project may also significantly advance its notion of the “silver thread” of virtues running through all religions and cultural traditions. Articulations of virtues that involve the historical and cultural retrievals of diverse moral sources that find the virtues morally beautiful would extend the brief accounts of the virtues that appear on the virtues cards set and in the glossary of virtues in the *Educator’s Guide* (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000; Virtues Project International, 2002b). The deep articulations of virtues shared and reflected on in cross-cultural dialogues may also inform toleration of moral differences (Isaacs, 2009b, p. 7). Such articulations could also reveal more about the dimensions to our moral being that we may have in common. If Taylor’s thesis is correct, then without the articulation of moral sources and constitutive goods that people might presuppose when they love the virtues through The Virtues Project strategies, the adherence to the virtues might eventually weaken, which could entail disconnection, sacrifice and loss (C. Taylor, 1989, p. 63).

Articulation of cross-cultural dialogues and the love for virtues in diverse moral sources could extend The Virtues Project mission (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2005, pp. Promotion-1) to investigate the cultivation of virtues in cultures and societies. This may well be a possible pathway that The Virtues Project could open up to more directly deal with powerful social forces that present great challenges for moral flourishing of individuals and communities. This would, of course, be a project of the kind and on the same massive scale that Taylor and Nussbaum are endeavouring to undertake (Nussbaum, 2013; C. Taylor, 1989, 2007). The potential success of these projects is made at least imaginable because a contrapuntal cross-cultural dialogue revealed a fusion of horizons between the modern Mongolian teachers and The Virtues Project.
The Virtues Project is just one moral education approach. This exploration has shown that it contains insightful ways of engaging in moral education in our modern context of multiple cross-cultural opportunities. This research does not undervalue an approach to moral education from the individual self such as programs based on psychology and cognitive science. This research has explored and, as a result, would recommend, philosophical, relational and culturally embedded approaches as invaluable additions to moral education. The Mongolian school experience is the story of just one school within one cultural context engaging with The Virtues Project. This exploration is the articulation of just one researcher. Exploration of moral education programs and experiences with their implementation across a range of cultural school contexts could create understandings for further enrichment of moral flourishing in schools.

An interesting observation about the parallel involvement of the teachers with the narrative inquiry bears mention. The opportunity to reflect on their moral education experiences in narrative inquiry engagements was, in itself, an expressive-collaborative space for teacher moral reflection. It was the arena in which the contrapuntal cross-cultural dialogue became discernable after narrative analysis. It quite possibly played a significant part in bringing the teachers closer to their moral sources, providing richer connection and taking them closer to their moral quest for a modern Mongolian identity.

The Tayloren framework’s rich account of the moral form of life and the nature of the self that speaks to the experience of being human has opened up a moral space that enabled a deep exploration of The Virtues Project in the ontological and ethical, the educational and the cross-cultural dimensions. Though much work
may need to be done, the potential for further enrichment of The Virtues Project as a result of the kind of exploration in this study seems very plausible.

The moral plurality of assumptions about what constitutes the moral form of life and the nature of the self are generally not examined or fully understood by moral education practitioners, program developers, policy-makers, funding agencies or researchers. This study may go some way to highlighting the benefits for moral education to examine these assumptions. It is my firm hope that my research will be a helpful source of continued development of moral understanding in The Virtues Project community and for educators and Mongolians, particularly those involved in the case study. I also hope that it becomes a worthwhile contribution to the work of everyone in the field of moral education and to the experience of moral education for students.
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Appendices

Appendix A: Timeline of Historical Eras That Have Shaped Mongolian Society

This timeline from 46,000 BP to the present day is a composite of two timelines and supportive information from three sources (Barfield, 2001, p. 23; Hanks, 2010, p. 471; Kemery, 2006).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approx. date range</th>
<th>Time period</th>
<th>Developments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>46,000 to 10,000 BP</td>
<td>Upper Paleolithic</td>
<td>Peopling of northern Eurasian; possible beginnings of shamanistic thinking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10,000 to 6000 BC</td>
<td>Mesolithic-Early Neolithic</td>
<td>Complex hunter-gatherer adaptations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10,000 to 3500 BC</td>
<td>Neolithic-Eneolithic</td>
<td>Horse domestication, Indo-European Languages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3500 to 1200 B.C.</td>
<td>Bronze Age</td>
<td>Metallurgy, spoke-wheeled chariots, inter-regional trade, stone monuments, felt-walled tent (ger) development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1200 to 300 BC</td>
<td>Final Bronze–Early Iron Age</td>
<td>Mobile pastoralism, cavalry warfare.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500 to 155 BC</td>
<td>Nomadic Polities</td>
<td>China-steppe interaction; warring polities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>209 BC to 155 CE</td>
<td>Hunnu Empire</td>
<td>Unity of steppe polities to create Hunnu Uls; raids and treaties warfare tactics, particularly with Chinese dynasties.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>130 CE to 840 CE</td>
<td>Numerous small polities with some more powerful for short periods</td>
<td>Warring nomadic polities; various religious interactions; various religious groups active (Buddhism, Nestorian Christianity, Islamic).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1206 to 1368</td>
<td>Mongol Empire and Yuan Dynasty</td>
<td>Chinggis Khaan unites steppe polities, creates the Mongol Uls and begins the Chingissid leadership lineage; spread of Empire to Manchuria, China and Tibet, Central Eurasia and Russia, northern India, Persia and Mesopotamia?, and the borders of Europe; reinterpretation of shamanic understandings (later identified as Tenggerism); tolerance of pluralist religious presence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1368 to 1911</td>
<td>Oirats and Khalkha Mongols (Eastern Mongols)</td>
<td>Weakened Mongol Uls. Strengthening Tibetan Buddhism for Khalkha Mongols; establishment of Mongolian Lamaism and network of Buddhist monasteries; Qing Dynasty over lordship of weaken and divided Mongol Chingissid lineage khans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approx. date range</td>
<td>Time period</td>
<td>Developments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911 to 1924</td>
<td>The Five Aimags</td>
<td>Tibetan Lama-Khaan and provincial Chingissid khans fighting for Mongol Uls autonomy from China control.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924 to 1990</td>
<td>Socialist Era</td>
<td>Purging of Chingissid leadership lineage, lamas and monasteries by Stalin-controlled Choibalsan; creation of the Mongolian nation; restructuring of Mongolian societal infrastructure; establishment of industry, townships, schools, court system, Russian over lordship of Mongolian socialist government.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990 to Present</td>
<td>Transition Era</td>
<td>Autonomy/independence and adoption of capitalist democracy; international development sector assistance; mining sector development; rapid expansion of cities, modern lifestyles and social practices.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B: Overview of the Research Design

The coherence of the moral framework of The Virtues Project is analysed from the perspective of three aspects: the ethical and ontological, the educational and the cross-cultural. The ethical and ontological aspect is analysed in Chapter Four and presents a thematic analysis of The Virtues Project as informed by the philosophical framework provided in Chapter Three. The educational analysis is presented in Chapter Six and the cross-cultural analysis in Chapter Eight. These two chapters draw from the qualitative empirical data generated from the school case study using The Listening Guide as the data collection and data analysis instrument. The following schema provides an overview of these three foci of analysis that together generate the research findings for the study. (See next page for overview of research design schema.)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Background Research and Data Collection</th>
<th>Data Analysis</th>
<th>Chapter with Analysis Discussion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How may there be a resonance between The Virtues Project and the moral form of life as articulated in the Tayloorean account?</td>
<td>• No research participants required.</td>
<td>• Chapter 2 describes The Virtues Project.</td>
<td>• Conceptual framework in Chapter 3 provides the structure of analysis of ontological and ethical assumptions of The Virtues Project.</td>
<td>• Chapter 4 is the analysis discussion exploring the coherence of the Virtues Project’s tacit ontological and ethical assumptions and its resonance with Taylor’s account of the moral form of life and its ontological features.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How feasible is it for The Virtues Project to be realized in a school context, given that it was originally a family program?</td>
<td>• Participants in the case study school. (see Appendix C for narrative contributor information)</td>
<td>• Chapter 5 explains the methodology and analysis of this case study. (see Appendix E for the narrative case study timeline and Appendix D for interview question sets and dates conducted)</td>
<td>• The Listening Guide was adopted and adapted (Gilligan et al., 2004; Jones, 2012; Milligan, 2008). (see Appendix I for detailed steps of the analysis process)</td>
<td>• Chapter 6 is the analysis discussion exploring the educational coherence of The Virtues Project to enhance moral flourishing in a school setting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. How might The Virtues Project resonate with a cultural context dissimilar to the North American cultural context of its development?</td>
<td>• Participants in the case study school. (see Appendix C for narrative contributor information)</td>
<td>• Chapter 5 explains the methodology and analysis of this case study. (see Appendix E for the narrative case study timeline and Appendix D for interview question sets and dates conducted)</td>
<td>• The Listening Guide was adopted and adapted (Gilligan et al., 2004; Jones, 2012; Milligan, 2008). (see Appendix I for detailed steps of the analysis process)</td>
<td>• Chapter 8 is the analysis discussion exploring the cross-cultural resonance of The Virtues Project in a Mongolian context.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix C: Corresponding Features Found in The Virtues Project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section Heading</th>
<th>Corresponding Features of The Virtues Project Discussed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conceptions of the Self in The Virtues Project</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Interpretations and Self-Interpretations** | • Virtues language seen as interpretation of action and locates experience in a space of moral and spiritual issues.  
• Virtues language and practice are a cycle for refinement, revision or rejection of interpretation of virtues.  
• Strategies and sharing circle activity provide opportunity for reinterpretation. |
| **Being and Becoming** | • Mastery of virtues practice is a process of becoming.  
• Recognizing strength and growth virtues are opportunities for self-interpretation.  
• Practicing virtues leads to moral flourishing. |
| **Purposes** | • Virtues practice develops, refines or alters purposes and life purpose.  
• Virtues language recognizes moral purposes.  
• Virtues are common purposes. |
| **Language** | • Virtues language is a medium for understanding virtues as concepts and in practice.  
• Virtues language creates a culture of virtues practice.  
• Virtues language can also be expressed in the broader meaning of language (e.g., the arts).  
• Virtues are moral understandings expressing cultural values. |
| **Narrative** | • Virtues language has the features of a narrative.  
• In teachable moments life can be grasped in narrative.  
• Restorative justice and virtues-based boundaries provides opportunities for reinterpreting life narratives.  
• Sharing personal narratives in honouring the spirit activities enriches interpretations of the world and ourselves.  
• Spiritual companioning gives people opportunities to have a voice and feel valued.  
• Storying together is an opportunity for people to voice their narratives about virtues in practice.  
• The narratives of virtues in practice are the keepers of moral meaning. |
### Conceptions of the Self in The Virtues Project (cont.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section Heading</th>
<th>Corresponding Features of The Virtues Project Discussed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Dialogical Engagement** | • The five strategies are dialogical engagements deliberately focused on navigating the space of moral and spiritual questions about who it is good to be and what is worthy of love.  
  • Shaming and blaming language disempowers, naming virtues language empowers, both influence identity.  
  • Practicing virtues language creates webs of interlocution focused on virtues understanding and practice.  
  • Practicing virtues language builds trust in relationships and communities because people feel worthy and recognize others as worthy.  
  • Virtues language is a shared good and enriches the moral space with shared understandings about virtues in practice.  
  • Virtues language is a web of voices building up narrative understanding of virtues that enable flourishing. |
| **Relational Embeddedness** | • The five strategies:  
  o are relationally embedded.  
  o enrich relationships.  
  o become a social force of care and mutual trust.  
  • Virtues terms:  
  o resonate with our deepest selves.  
  o draw on embedded historical and cultural understandings.  
  • Spiritual companioning is an empowering relational engagement.  
  • Virtues-based boundaries and restorative justice are about maintaining, building, restoring and re-negotiating relationships.  
  • Virtues language is based on trust, authenticity and creative expression. |
| **Material Embodiment**   | • Virtues practice is the material embodiment of virtues.  
  • Virtues language links the material embodiment of virtues (in practice) to dialogical moral space.  
  • Virtues language is a plausible narrative because it is about our material embodiment of the virtues (in practice).  
  • Virtues language mediates cross-cultural and universal moral understandings.  
  • The Virtues Project uses the common ground of material/physical metaphors, which have a global appeal. |
| **Vulnerability**         | • Violence is interpreted as as the loss of meaning and purpose in life.  
  • People have physical and moral/spiritual vulnerabilities.  
  • Virtues practice in a community decreases vulnerability to psychological and physical violence.  
  • Virtues language sees the other as worthy of respect and care.  
  • Virtues language defeats the narcissistic tendencies that lead to violence.  
  • The five strategies recognize vulnerability and identify virtues needs for individual and community flourishing.  
  • The Virtues Project articulates evil as: violence, absence of virtues practice, loss of meaning and purpose, disempowerment through shaming and blaming.  
  • Virtues language is a moral education approach that focuses on moral beauty in each other rather than a narcissistic view. |
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section Heading</th>
<th>Corresponding Features of The Virtues Project Discussed</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conceptions of the Moral Form of Life</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Strong Evaluation, Moral Goods and Moral Identity     | • Virtues language:                                                                                                                                  
  o is a verbal expression of strong evaluation.  
  o gives freedom to choose what is worthy and admirable.  
  o expresses what is good to do and who it is good to be.  
• Virtues are elements emanating from all moral sources.  
• Virtues practice differs in every moment.  
• Focus is on virtues not on the constitutive good that interprets practice mode or configuration in a moral horizon.  
• Virtues “imbalance” is giving hypergood status to one virtue.  
• A good moral horizon is one with the virtues all in balance.  
• Virtues constitute our identity and give moral orientation. |
| Inescapable Moral Horizons, Moral Sources and Moral Quests | • The five strategies accommodate moral pluralism.                                                                                                                                         
  • Virtues are the common element in moral pluralism.  
  • Virtues are the common ground for the initial fusion of horizons for dialogical engagement.  
  • Articulation and practice of virtues enriches moral frameworks and meaningful life.  
  • The five strategies partially articulate our background understandings but do not require moral source retrieval.  
  • Virtues are in potential within is a modernist conception of identity and the self being within.  
  • The Virtues Project draws on the moral sources of Reason, Nature and God, seeing the latter as the ultimate moral source of the virtues.  
  • Virtues language aids the quest for more believable moral frameworks.  
  • Virtues language exists in a common moral space and can blend diverse moral horizons.  
  • Virtues are the ‘silver thread’ in all sacred texts and cultural traditions, they are in shared moral space. |
| Together Goods and Social Practices                   | • Virtues are together goods developed in community through practice and virtues language.                                                                                                      
  • Virtues language can become a social practice that develops a caring community.  
  • The Virtues Project is informed by many social practices.  
  • The Virtues Project is itself a social practice. |
| Practical Reason                                      | • Virtues language, virtues-based boundaries and spiritual companionship are simple forms of practical reasoning about virtues.  
  • The five strategies use strongly evaluative language to make virtues in tacit backgrounds discernable.  
  • Virtues language requires attentiveness to the other.  
  • Virtues language has the same presupposed cluster of moral goods as practical reason. |
### Conceptions of the Moral Form of Life (cont.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Articulation of Moral Horizons</th>
<th>Features</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Virtues language increases love for the virtues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Virtues language empowers individuals and communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Virtues language can bring people closer to their moral sources if they are already aware of them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Moral sources are not articulated in virtues language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Virtues accounts in the virtues cards source multiple sacred texts and cultural traditions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The list of virtues names continues to grow (a list of 620 is available) but virtues accounts on virtues cards remains at 52 for schools and 100 for personal reflection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The five strategies do not include the exploration and articulation of diverse ontological claims.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Exploration and articulation of moral sources of virtues is not considered necessary to cultivate virtues practice.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Conceptions of Moral Engagement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forms of Power and Ethics in Relationships</th>
<th>Features</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Shaming and blaming language is disempowering.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Virtues language is nurturative and integrative empowerment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The four principles focus on nurturative power.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The Virtues Project seeks to use integrative power with other approaches to moral education.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Moral Engagement as the Expressive-Collaborative Space of a Web of Interlocutors</th>
<th>Features</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Virtues language and practice in a web of interlocutors is moral negotiation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Virtues-based boundaries, restorative justice and spiritual companioning are strategies for working through morally problematic situations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The five strategies use an expressive collaborative model of morality.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Encounters with the Good</th>
<th>Features</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Virtues language is an encounter with the good because it recognizes moral beauty in virtues practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The five strategies:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o cultivate relational encounters with moral beauty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o establish inner encounters with the good.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>o enhance the construction of plausible life narrative.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section Heading</td>
<td>Corresponding Features of The Virtues Project Discussed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Conceptions of Cross-Cultural Opportunities</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Ontology in Culture** | • Virtues underpin the array of cultural goods available.  
• Virtues language enables interlocutors to interpret virtues from their perspective.  
• Virtues language enriches cultural and social capital. |
| **Culture and Powerful Social Movements** | • The negative influence of powerful social forces is recognized in today’s violence and feelings of meaninglessness.  
• The five strategies seek to combat the negative influence of social forces by focusing the power of virtues to empower. |
| **Conceptions of Cross-Cultural Opportunities (cont.)** | |
| **Cross-Cultural Discourse and Practical Reason** | • Virtues language opens up shared moral understandings and warm relationships in cross-cultural engagement.  
• Virtues language can be a first step to practical reasoning between diverse cultures.  
• The fives strategies focus on practical reasoning about virtues, not the historical and cultural embeddedness in moral sources of virtues for diverse people.  
• Articulating the moral beauty of virtues allows for different ways of practicing virtues in different cultural settings. |
| **The Possibility of a Basic Universal Morality that Embraces Plurality** | • Virtues language enhances thinking and acting along the moral axis of respect for others.  
• Virtues practice enhances thinking and acting along the moral axis of a meaningful life.  
• Virtues language practiced in community enhances thinking and acting along the axis of human dignity.  
• Virtues are the basic elements for all three moral axes.  
• Virtues language and practice are a basic universal morality.  
• Virtues language allows for the interpretation of the virtues on individual, cultural and universal levels.  
• The Virtues Project does not articulate its moral sources.  
• Virtues development through the five strategies is a simple solution to moral pluralism. |
### Appendix D: ‘Life Goods’ Inherent in The Virtues Project Strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Sample underpinning ‘Life Goods’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Strategy 1:** Speaking the Language of the Virtues | • empowering others  
• self-esteem  
• naming the virtues  
• remembering who we want to be  
• recognizing the virtues in others  
• giving positive encouragement  
• balancing the virtues with each other; the virtues |
| **Strategy 2:** Teachable Moments | • Learning  
• recognizing mistakes as opportunities to develop virtues  
• bringing out the best in each other  
• being a life-long learner  
• the virtues |
| **Strategy 3:** Setting Clear Boundaries | • having a shared vision of the virtues  
• preventing violence  
• an atmosphere of order and unity  
• positive discipline  
• amending bad behavior  
• developing social skills  
• the virtues |
| **Strategy 4:** Honouring the Spirit | • having a sense of values  
• having a sense of peace  
• reflecting on what matters  
• participating in the arts  
• celebrations  
• respecting diversity  
• schools without violence  
• the virtues |
| **Strategy 5:** Spiritual Companioning | • supporting healing in others  
• encouraging independent moral choice  
• safe expression of feelings  
• being present and listening  
• allowing others to tell their own story  
• independent problem solving using virtues  
• the virtues |
### Appendix E: ‘Life Goods’ Inherent in The Virtues Project Principles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principle</th>
<th>Sample underpinning ‘Life Goods’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Principle 1:** Children need respectful, empowering and consistent guidance, not unguided freedom, from an authority in service of children’s learning in order to learn self-authority (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2005, pp. Workshops-32). | • ‘authority in service of learning’ (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 58)  
• ‘mastery of the virtues in our character’ (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 83)  
• adult modelling of the virtues  
• the virtues  
• respectful engagement |
| **Principle 2:** Each child has the potential to exhibit all the virtues to a certain extent through choice and effort on their part based on information about how to be so they can learn to make healthy choices (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2005, pp. Workshops-32). | • Awakening the virtues within  
• educating the child about practicing the virtues  
• making healthy choices  
• to exhibit the virtues  
• the virtues |
| **Principle 3:** Feeling the power of making their own choices raises self-awareness in children, increasing the ability to self-define and the continuation of healthy choice-making (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2005, pp. Workshops-33). | • ‘true discipline happens inside’ (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 66)  
• ‘support children to discover their own wisdom and discernment’ (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 110)  
• having self-awareness  
• knowing the self  
• being able to make independent choices  
• engaging moral and spiritual awareness  
• awakening moral purpose  
• a strong conscience;  
• he virtues |
| **Principle 4:** Children act spiritually, and develop their inner authority and self-esteem, each time they choose to do something of the highest order (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2005, pp. Workshops-33). | • ‘building authentic self-esteem and real conscience’ (L. Kavelin-Popov, 2000, p. 10)  
• spiritual acts of the highest order  
• inner authority  
• self-esteem  
• bringing out the best in children  
• the virtues |
Appendix F: Narrative Case Study Timeline (August 2008 – April 2010)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Period</th>
<th>Occasions As A Record Of Events</th>
<th>Occasions As Narrative Contributions For Analysis Phase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Phase 1: August 2008 – January 2009 | Video Recordings:  
• First Two-Day Virtues Project Training For All School Staff  
• Lesson Observations  
• First Round of Demonstration student workshops  
Journal Recording:  
• Researcher’s - First Meeting With School Management Team  
• First Survey (Commissioned By The School Director) | Video Recordings:  
• Professional Development (Virtues Connection) Meetings |
| Phase 2: February – March 2009 | Video Recordings:  
• Lesson Observations  
• Student Focus Group Interviews  
• Ancillary Staff Focus Group Interview  
• First Round of Demonstration student workshops | Video Recordings:  
• Professional Development (Virtues Connection) Meetings  
• Teacher Interviews  
• School Management Interviews |
| Phase 3: March 2009 | Video Recordings:  
• Virtues Lessons  
• Second Two-Day Virtues Project Training For School Staff  
Journal Recording:  
• Students  
• Second Survey (Commissioned By The School Director) | Video Recordings:  
• Professional Development (Virtues Connection) Meetings  
• School Management Interview  
Journal Recording:  
• Teachers |
| Phase 4: April 2009 – February 2010 | Video Recordings:  
• First Three-Day Virtues Project Facilitator Training for School Staff  
• Second Round of Demonstration student workshops  
• Student Interviews  
• Lesson Observations  
• Parents Training in Virtues Project Conducted by New Facilitators (Teachers)  
Journal Recording:  
• Third Survey (Commissioned By The School Director) | Video Recordings:  
• Teacher Interviews  
• School Management Interviews  
• Professional Development (Virtues Connection) Meetings  
• First Two-Day Virtues Project Training Given by New Facilitators (Teachers)  
Journal Recording:  
• School Management |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Period</th>
<th>Occasions As A Record Of Events</th>
<th>Occasions As Narrative Contributions For Analysis Phase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phase 5: March 2010 – April 2010</td>
<td>Video Recordings:</td>
<td>• Professional Development (Virtues Connection) Meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Special Celebration – Reflection Interview Series Presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• School Management Presentation at Moral Education Forum in Ulaanbaatar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postscript: May 2010 – August 2014</td>
<td>Journal Recording:</td>
<td>• Reflection with New Master Facilitators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Informal Conversations About Significant Events and Developments of Case Study School, Master Facilitator Work and Careers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix G: Narrative Contributors and Transcript Listings

#### Narrative Contributors and Interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narrative Contributors</th>
<th>Role and Gender</th>
<th>Interviews, Date, and Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asralt</td>
<td>Social Worker, female</td>
<td>• February 2009, in Social Worker’s office in school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• June 2009, in Social Worker’s office in school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• March 2009, in Social Worker’s office in school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• February 2010, in Social Worker’s office in school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• April 2010, in Social Worker’s office in school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bat-Erdene</td>
<td>History Teacher, male</td>
<td>• February 2009, in classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• February 2010, in staffroom by Management offices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Battsooj</td>
<td>History Teacher, male</td>
<td>• February 2010, in staffroom by Management offices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Batukhan</td>
<td>Director, male</td>
<td>• February 2009, in Director’s office in school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• July 2009, in Director’s office in school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bileg-Oyun</td>
<td>Mathematics Teacher, female</td>
<td>• February 2009, in classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• June 2009, in classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• February 2010, in staffroom by Management offices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• April 2010, in private home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bolordusal</td>
<td>IT Teacher, female</td>
<td>• February 2009, in classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• March 2009, in classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• May 2009, in classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• February 2010, in staffroom by Management offices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• April 2010, in private home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bolormelmii</td>
<td>English Teacher, female</td>
<td>• May 2009, in classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• November 2009, in IT classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• February 2010, in staffroom by Management offices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• April 2010, in private home</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

34 Pseudonyms have been used to protect the identity of the research participants and the name of the case study school has also been withheld for this reason. Where a translator’s voice has entered into the narrative text a pseudonym has also been used.
## Narrative Contributors and Interviews (cont.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narrative Contributors</th>
<th>Role and Gender</th>
<th>Interviews, Date, and Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Enkhturleg             | Homeroom, Geography and Science Teacher, female | • February 2009, in classroom  
|                        |                | • May 2009, in classroom       |
|                        |                | • November 2009, in IT classroom |
|                        |                | • February 2010, in staffroom by Management offices |
|                        |                | • April 2010, in private home  |
| Ireedui                | Mathematics Teacher, female | • February 2009, in classroom  
|                        |                | • May 2009, in classroom       |
|                        |                | • November 2009, in IT classroom |
|                        |                | • February 2010, in staffroom by Management offices |
|                        |                | • April 2010, in private home  |
| Shijirtuya             | IT Teacher, female | • February 2009, in classroom  
|                        |                | • May 2009, in classroom       |
|                        |                | • February 2010, in staffroom by Management offices |
|                        |                | • April 2010, in private home  |
| Tsogzolboo             | English Teacher, female | • May 2009, in classroom       |
|                        |                | • November 2009, in IT classroom |
|                        |                | • February 2010, in staffroom by Management offices |
|                        |                | • April 2010, in private home  |

## Research Journal Contributors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Narrative Contributors</th>
<th>Research Journal Date Received</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asralt</td>
<td>February, 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bileg-Oyun</td>
<td>March 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireedui</td>
<td>March 2009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shijirtura</td>
<td>March 2009</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Professional Development Meetings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of Professional Development Meeting</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18 November 2008</td>
<td>in classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 December 2008</td>
<td>in classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 January 2009</td>
<td>in classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 February 2009</td>
<td>in classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 March 2009</td>
<td>in classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 March 2009</td>
<td>in classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 March 2009</td>
<td>in classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 March 2009</td>
<td>in classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 April 2009</td>
<td>in private home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 August 2009</td>
<td>in private home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 November 2009</td>
<td>in classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 November 2009</td>
<td>in classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 November 2009</td>
<td>in classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27 November 2009</td>
<td>in classroom</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Professional Development Meetings (cont.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of Professional Development Meeting</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8 December 2009</td>
<td>in classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 January 2010</td>
<td>in classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 April 2010</td>
<td>in classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 May 2010</td>
<td>in private home</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Workshops Conducted by Narrative Contributors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of Workshops</th>
<th>Workshop and Workshop Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30 March – 1 April 2009</td>
<td>three-day workshop for teachers in classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 – 11 December 2012</td>
<td>two-day workshop for teachers in another school classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 January 2010</td>
<td>parent workshop in classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 April 2010</td>
<td>Forum: Dialogue on Moral Education in Mongolia, for moral education sector in Ulaanbaatar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 – 3 May 2010</td>
<td>three day workshop for teachers in Mongolian Education Alliance conference room</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix H: Interview Question Sets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>February, 2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Looking at the survey results are there any unusual patterns and discrepancies that you notice? What do you think these mean?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How do teachers understand the concepts of The Virtues Project? What have you seen others do, or heard about what others have done, to implement what they have learned?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What have you noticed in the students who have been exposed to The Virtues Project strategies and information about the virtues?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. What strategies have you noticed being used by teachers, how were they used, and what kind of impact have you noticed?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Do you think The Virtues Project has something to offer the school, and who in the school would most benefit by it? What is, or could be, the benefit of The Virtues Project? If The Virtues Project is not implemented across the school, what might result? If it is implemented across the school, what might result?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>May, 2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. <strong>Purpose of Education</strong>: What do you think the purpose of education is? What do you think is the best way this can happen? How is this the same or different to what is happening in the school now? What do you notice about the purpose of education in The Virtues Project? How has this changed the way you see the purpose of education?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role of Moral Education: What role do you think moral education should have in the school? What should the purpose of moral education be? What do you see happening in the school about moral education right now? Is this different to the last school year? What contribution has The Virtues Project made to moral education in the school? What kind of difference has The Virtues Project made to the way moral education happens in the school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. <strong>Personal Goals at School</strong>: What do you hope to achieve as a teacher or student in this school? How does the school community (administration, staff, students, parents) support your goals? How has The Virtues Project affected your personal goals at school? How has The Virtues Project affected the way you are supported by the school community, (by administration, staff, students, parents)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. <strong>School Atmosphere</strong>: How do people feel about each other and how does this affect the school atmosphere? What do you feel about this kind of school atmosphere? What do you do either to keep this school atmosphere or to change it? How has The Virtues Project changed the atmosphere in the school? What parts of The Virtues Project contributed to the different changes you see.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. <strong>School Language</strong>: How do people speak to each other in the school (adults with each other, students with each other, adults and students to each other)? What way do you speak to others in the school and is this the same way for everyone in the school? How has The Virtues Project changed the way you speak to your friends, others, your teachers? What parts of The Virtues Project caused these changes in you?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
May, 2009 (cont.)

5. **Moral Choice-making Preferences:** What kinds of problems do you see happen most often between people in this school? What kinds of moral choices (decisions and solutions) do you see happen to solve those problems and challenges? How does this affect you and what do you do about it? What ways has The Virtues Project affected the way moral choice-making happens amongst people in the school? How has The Virtues Project helped you in your moral choice-making?

6. **Moral Models:** What kind of moral life do you want for yourself? Who are your moral examples and what is it about them that you admire and want to see in your own character and life? What kind of influence has The Virtues Project had on the kind of moral life you want for yourself? What kind of influence has The Virtues Project had on the kinds of moral examples you admire now?

7. **Ideal World:** What is your idea of an ideal world? What are you doing to bring that ideal about? What do you think the Virtues Project’s idea of an ideal world is? How is this different to your idea of an ideal world? What has The Virtues Project done to help you bring your ideal world about?

8. **Moral Life at Home:** What kinds of moral expectations are there at home for you? How do you behave at home? How do you like to behave at home? What kind of reaction did you get at home about The Virtues Project? What kinds of changes have happened at home because you have learned about The Virtues Project? What kind of change is there in your moral behaviour at home?

9. **The Character of Young People Today:** Describe what kind of character young people have today. How is this different to the character of young people in Soviet times? How is this different to the character of young people in Mongolian history times? What kind of character would you like to see in the young people of today? What kind of young people do you think The Virtues Project like to see today? Do you like to see the same thing? Do you think that The Virtues Project helps to develop young people to have this kind of character? What do you think it is about The Virtues Project that will develop this kind of character in young people?

November, 2009

1. Talk about your experience meeting with the other school you will be part of training, and which of your experiences with The Virtues Project you would like to share with them.

2. Share the achievements of the Virtues Connection team and the plans you have for your school.

3. What is different this year about staff relationships and attitudes in the school?

4. Talk about The Virtues Project activities going on in your school and what you and your colleagues have initiated?

February, 2010

1. What kind of impact has The Virtues Project had on you, on students, on other teachers, and on the school as a whole?

2. Do you think there is a more effective way to introduce The Virtues Project into a school? What improved ways are you thinking of?

3. How do you use each of the five strategies in the classroom? (virtues language, teachable moments, virtues-based boundaries, honouring the spirit, and spiritual companioning)
**February, 2010 (cont.)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4. Do you integrate virtues into the subject lessons you teach? Describe how do you do this?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. How does The Virtues Project fit with your belief in life? What is the same between your beliefs and what you see in The Virtues Project? What is different between your beliefs and what you see in The Virtues Project?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Do you think The Virtues Project fits with all the different beliefs in Mongolia? What is it about The Virtues Project that makes it so acceptable?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. What parts of The Virtues Project are really effective in developing individuals, students, teachers, and the school atmosphere?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**April, 2010**

Group interview focus: Share the important highlights of implementation of The Virtues Project in your school.
Appendix I: The Listening Guide Adapted for the Case Study

Analysis Process

1. Prepare transcripts to have one sentence only in each entry in an Excel spread sheet.
2. Insert row at top of each transcript for description of location, historical placing of interview, and who is present.
3. Add columns for each entry for transcript file name, entry number, and speaker’s name.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>File Name of Transcript</th>
<th>Entry #</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

4. Identify stanzas (small, discrete stories) and insert a stanza row at the end of each stanza to write the stanza response.
5. Create two columns, one for the stanza number and one for the stanza response entry, and enter in the stanza numbering.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stanza #</th>
<th>Stanza Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

6. (Listening for the ‘Plot’ as noun): Give attention to the terrain and the themes crossed: where the narrator stands on the landscape, what features the narrator is encountering, what is happening in relation to the broader social and cultural landscape to which the narrative relates. Define and name the map of the terrain: what is being spoken about, what is happening (attending to the multiple contexts in which the story is embedded - where, when, why, and with whom).
7. (Listening for the ‘Plot’ as verb): how the narrator travels, charts, navigates, negotiates, moves, flows, transitions; how others in the story travel, chart, navigate, negotiate, move, flow, transition; the course, path, journey across, about, through, around; the landscape, various obstacles, the terrain, particular contours, landforms, and landmarks; influenced, guided by, embedded in, that to which they relate, link in, multiple, familial, social, cultural, institutional interpretive filters, lenses, frameworks, (broader social dynamics that define cultural narratives of moral life).
8. Listening Guide – Step 1a: Write a listener’s response: Where do I stand in relation to the participant? What resonances, dissonances, and consonances can be heard? How did I feel hearing the participant’s storied account? How has the account moved me? Draw into interpretation the social, cultural, intellectual and moral contexts from and through which human life is oriented.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THEME A: Prior Understandings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
a. ideas about teacher training |
b. ideas about teaching |
c. ideas about learning |
d. sense of self-worth and happiness |
e. expected and valued ways of being |
f. visions and purposes |
g. values and beliefs |
h. flow of power in teacher-teacher relationships |
i. flow of power in teacher-student relationships |
j. flow of power in teacher-leadership relationships |
k. flow of power in student-student relationships |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THEME B: Implementation Of Virtues Project</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
a. training |
b. virtues connections |
c. training students, teachers, other schools |
d. virtues |
e. virtues language (acknowledge, guide, correct) |
f. teachable moments |
g. virtues-based boundaries |
h. honouring the spirit |
i. art of companioning |
j. virtues cards |
k. virtues poster |
l. sharing circles |
m. virtues pick |
An Exploration of The Virtues Project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>relationships</th>
<th>n. acknowledge, correct, thank sandwich</th>
<th>o. measuring moral climate</th>
<th>p. creative application and initiative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**THEME C:**
New Understandings
a. ideas about teacher training
b. ideas about teaching
c. ideas about learning
d. sense of self-worth and happiness
e. expected and valued ways of being
f. visions and purposes
g. values and beliefs
h. flow of power in teacher-teacher relationships
i. flow of power in teacher-student relationships
j. flow of power in teacher-leadership relationships
k. flow of power in student-student relationships

**THEME D:**
Receptiveness and Obstacles
a. attitude towards foreign ideas
b. attitude towards foreigners
c. attitude towards research/researcher
d. attitude towards work
e. attitude to/from authority
f. attitude towards new ideas
g. school activity funding
h. resources and resourcefulness
i. school timetable
j. subject focused curriculum
k. family situations
l. learning from experience and observation


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>‘I’ Voice</th>
<th>‘We’ Voice</th>
<th>‘They’ Voice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

11. Mark the sentence entries into ‘I’ Voice / ‘We’ Voice / ‘They’ Voice for each stanza and place under each column; extract all ‘I,’ ‘We,’ and ‘They’ references along with accompanying verb and accompanying clarification in context; notice the relational qualifiers and explaining of actions in terms of preserving or negotiating these relationships.

12. Listening Guide – Step 2: Unpack the stanzas by listening to the ‘I,’ ‘We,’ and ‘They’ voices for inner tensions, dissonances, conflicting and contradictory thought processes; how first-person voice speaks about self; the ‘We’ and ‘They’ shaping the story and to whom the self stands in relation to; identify the underlying power dynamics that shape behaviour, and further connections to the broader cultural dynamics at play; note the themes and harmonies. Make notes under each Voice column in the stanza row.

13. Add columns for ‘Ethical Good’ and ‘Ethical Harm’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethical Good</th>
<th>Ethical Harm</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

14. Listening Guide – Step 3: With the third reading of the narrative texts refer to action step 12; name embedded contexts and narratives that run in counterpoint or contrast through the narrative text that could be familial, social, cultural, institutional, political, technological, professional; from this reading identify the narrator’s strong evaluations of ‘good’ and ‘harm’; define the narrator’s positions in relation to ethical features noting the tensions within actor/s of the stanzas.

15. In the stanza row for each column write the ethical feature/s in each stanza story, sorting them in to the Ethical Good or Ethical Harm columns.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THEME 1: School Moral Climate</th>
<th>THEME 2: Curriculum</th>
<th>THEME 3: Teaching</th>
<th>THEME 4: Teacher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
a. ‘virtues language’ values | a. a broader view | a. nurturing power | a. becoming |
b. nomadic values            | b. subject-bound   | b. integrative power | b. moral |
c. socialist values          |                    | c. force and       | c. training   |
d. isolation                 |                    | aggression         | development |

17. Listen to the narrative texts for the main themes: what has been learned about the narrators and their relationships with each other; what has been learned about others in the school community and their relationships with them.
18. Collect narrative text excerpts that support the listener’s interpretations of the categories in each theme, and organize them for easy reference.

19. Listening Guide – Step 4: As narrative inquirer, who is listener, interpret the stories to synthesize the school’s story from what has been illuminated in the previous three ‘listenings’ and in the light of the aims of the exploration.
PARTICIPANT INFORMATION for QUT RESEARCH PROJECT

“A Critical Appraisal of The Virtues Project”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Team Contacts</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dorothea (Dorrie) Hancock, doctoral candidate</td>
<td>research assistant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+976 - 95821992</td>
<td>[contact details omitted for confidentially reasons]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="mailto:dorrie.hancock@gmail.com">dorrie.hancock@gmail.com</a></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Description**

This project is being undertaken as PhD research for Dorrie Hancock. The project is funded by the PhD candidate. No other body or organization will have access to the data obtained during the project.

The purpose of this project is to write the story of [name omitted] School’s understanding and experience of putting a moral education approach, The Virtues Project, into action.

The research project will study the school’s story to find out how the moral framework of the school and the moral framework of the moral education approach, The Virtues Project, work together.

The research team requests your assistance because your experiences and understandings will make up part of the school’s story.

**Participation**

Your participation in this project is voluntary. If you do agree to participate, you can withdraw from participation at any time during the project without comment or penalty.

Your decision to participate will in no way impact upon your current or future relationship with QUT (for example your grades) or with [name omitted] School.

Your participation includes attending training workshops and might involve an interview, questionnaire, survey, focus group, or being observed, videoed or photographed in class.

The research project will be in your school for this school year, 2008, and you might become involved in some of the research activities, or perhaps none of them. The researchers will make sure that you are not burdened by the time you spend on these activities. The project activities will only be conducted at the school during the hours that the school is open.

**Expected benefits**

This project may benefit your school in learning about developing a moral education approach and establishing a culture of character.

**Risks**

There are no risks beyond normal day-to-day living associated with your participation in this project.

**Confidentiality**

---

35 This was the working title of the research project during the fieldwork phase.
All comments and responses are anonymous and will be treated confidentially. The names of individual persons are not required in any of the responses. For interviews focus groups: comments will be verified by participants before being finally included in the research data. For audio/video recordings:
- audio/video recordings will be verified by participants before being finally included in the research data;
- participant verified video recordings may be used as an instructional aide;
- only the researcher will have access to the audio/video recording; and
- it is possible to participate in the project without being recorded.

Consent to Participate

We would like to ask you to sign a written consent form (enclosed) to confirm your agreement to participate.

Questions / further information about the project

Please contact the researcher team members named above to have any questions answered or if you require further information about the project.

Concerns / complaints regarding the conduct of the project

QUT is committed to researcher integrity and the ethical conduct of research projects. However, if you do have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of the project you may contact the QUT Research Ethics Officer on 3138 2340 or ethicscontact@qut.edu.au. The Research Ethics Officer is not connected with the research project and can facilitate a resolution to your concern in an impartial manner.

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An Exploration of The Virtues Project

Та бүхэн энэ судалгааны ажилд сайн дураараа оролцох юм. Хэрэв та судалгаанд оролцохыг зөвшөөрөөн ч судалгааны үзээр хүвэл та ямар нэгэн тайлбар болон цааргалах зүйлүүгээр судалгаанд оролцоохос татгалж болно.

Таны судалгаанд оролцов ээх шийдвэр чинь КТИС болон [---] r сургууль хоорондны харьцаанд тань одоо болон ирээдүйд нөлөөлдөх байх болно. Та судалгаанд оролцоохдоо сургалтанд хамардагдах, ярилцлага огоч, асуулга, судалгаанд хамардаж, фокус групп болон антид ажиглалтанд хамардаж, дурс бичлэг хийлээгэх, зураг авахуулах зэрэгт хамардаж юм.

Судалгааны ажил 2008 оны хичээлээрээ жилд явагдана. Энэ хугацаанд та судалгааны ажлын зарим нэг ўйл ажиллаандаа хамардах магадгүй айлын эсээн хамардажгүй ч байж болох юм.

Судалгааны багийнхан эдгээр ўйл ажиллаандаа оролцох нь танд дарамттай байгаа эсэхийг эцэх гэдэг мэдэх болно. Судалгааны ажил нь зөвхөн сургууль дээр, сургууль ажиллаж байх уед зохион байгуулдагда.

**Хүснэ хүлээж байгаа ўр дүн**

Энэ судалгааны ўр дүнд танай сургууль ёс суртахууны боловсрын аргаас судалж, зан чанарын соёлын суурийг тавьж болох юм.

**Эрдэл**

Энэ судалгаанд ердийн өдөр түтүн амьдралын холбогдон оролцоонор та ямар нэгэн эрдэлд орхогүй юм.

**Нууцлал**

Бух санал бодол, харинтууд нь нэгээгий байх ба нууцыг хаягалсан байна. Хувь хүний нэр аль ч харинтууд дээр шаардлагагүй.

Фокус группийнхэнээс авах ярилцлага: Ярилцлага огсоо оролцооныг ызүүлсэн ээст судалгаанд хавсрална.

Дуу болон дурс бичлэг:

- Дурс бичлэг хийлээгэн оролцоогийн ызүүлсэн ээст судалгаанд хавсрална.
- Оролцогч бичлэгийг ызүүлсэн дарах хичээл сургалтанд туслах материал болгон ашиглах
- Дуу болон дурс бичлэг нь зөвхөн судлаач ашиглах эрхтэй
- Бичлэг хийлээгэнээээр судалгаанд хамардаж болно

Судалгаанд хамардах зөвшөөрөл

Та судалгаанд хамардажгүй зөвшөөрөл бичгээр гарын үсэгээр зүрж баталж ажиллахыг хусье.

**Асуплүүд / судалгааны цаасаны ажлын талаарх мэдээлэл**

Тан судалгааны ажлын талаар болон цаасаны мэдээллийн талаар асуулт байвал дээр бичигдсэн судалгааны хамардажгүй холбогдон хариуцлат авна уу.

Санаа зовж байгаа болон / судалгааны ажилтаа холбогтоо санал

КТИС-ын судалгаачтай хамтран ажиллаж байгаа болон судалгаа явуулахыг ёс зүйн хувьд хүлээн зөвшөөрөөң байгууллага юм. Гэсэн хэдий ч хэрэв та судалгааны ажиллах холбоотой санаа зовосон болоно ёс зүйн талаар мэдээллийг хүсвэл КТИС-ийн судалгааны ёс зүйн Ажилтантай 3138 2340 дугаарт утгааар холбогдох биолуу ethicscontact@qut.edu.au хаягаар хариуцаж болох юм.

Судалгааны ёс зүйн Ажилтан нь судалгааны ажиллаж холбоогүй ба таны санаа зовж байгаа асуудлыг эргэлтээ зүйллүүгээр шийдээд туслах юм.
Appendix K: School Staff Consent (English and Mongolian)

CONSENT FORM for QUT RESEARCH PROJECT

“A Critical Appraisal of The Virtues Project”

Statement of consent

By signing below, you are indicating that you:

• have read and understood the information document regarding this project
• have had any questions answered to your satisfaction
• understand that if you have any additional questions you can contact the research team
• understand that you are free to withdraw at any time, without comment or penalty
• understand that you can contact the Research Ethics Officer on 3138 2340 or ethicscontact@qut.edu.au if you have concerns about the ethical conduct of the project
• agree to participate in the project
• understand that the project will include audio and/or video recording, please comment below if you do not wish to be included in audio and/or video recording.

Name

Signature

Comment

Date / / year month day

КТИС - СУДАЛГААНЫ АЖИЛ ЗӨВШӨӨРЛИЙН МАЯГТ

“Зан Чанарын Тослийн нарийвчилсан ёс зүйн унэлгээ”

Зөвшөөрлийн мэдэгдэл

438
Та гарын үсгээ зүрснээр дараах зүйлсийг хүлээн зөвшөөрч байгаа хэрэг юм:

• Судалгааны ажилтай холбоотой зөвлөлдөө баримтыг уншжээ
• Та сонирхож байсан асуультын хариугаа олсон тул сэтгэл хангалуун байна
• Хэрэв нэмэлт асуульт байвал Судалгааны Багийнхантай холбогдноо гэдгээ ойлгосон
• Судалгааны үеүүр хувцас та ямар нэгэн тайлбар болон цааргалын зүйл болж хувилжээ үүрсэн Судалгааны ардлаа буюу татгалзаж болно гэдгээ ойлгосон
• Судалгааны ахлын талаар санал зөвөөсөн болон өс зүйн талаар мэдээллээд хувцас КТИС-ийн Судалгааны Ёс Зүйн Ажилтанын 3138 2340 дугаарын үгцээр холбогдох буюу ethicscontact@qut.edu.au хаягаар харилах болоно гэдгээ ойлгосон
• Судалгааны ажилд оролцохыг зөвшөөррөсөн
• Насанд чөрөгүүчүүдийг судалгаанд хамруулаа: хэрэв таны хүүхэд судалгааны хамрагдах бол үхэх шаардлагатай талаар зөвлөлдөө болно
• Судалгааны ажилд дуу бичлэг, дурс бичлэг хийнэ гэдгээ ойлгосон. Та хүүхэдээ зураг авах, дурс бичлэг хийлээд оролцоолахыг хүсээгүй байгаа бол дор саналaa бичнэ үү.

Нэр

Гарын үсэг

Санал

Он, сар,өдөр / / /
он сар одер
Appendix L: Student and Parent Consent (English and Mongolian)

CONSENT FORM for QUT RESEARCH PROJECT

“A Critical Appraisal of The Virtues Project”

Statement of Child consent

Your parent or guardian has given their permission for you to be involved in this research project. This form is to seek your agreement to be involved.

By signing below, you are indicating that the project has been discussed with you and you agree to participate in the project.

Name

Signature

Date

Statement of consent

By signing below, you are indicating that you:

• have read and understood the information document regarding this project
• have had any questions answered to your satisfaction
• understand that if you have any additional questions you can contact the research team
• understand that you are free to withdraw at any time, without comment or penalty
• understand that you can contact the Research Ethics Officer on 3138 2340 or ethicscontact@qut.edu.au if you have concerns about the ethical conduct of the project
• agree to participate in the project
• for projects involving minors: you have discussed the project with your child and their requirements if participating
• understand that the project will include audio and/or video recording, please comment below if you do not wish for your child to be included in audio and/or video recording.
Анал.'&nbsp;&nbs...
2340 дугаарын утсаар холбогдох бузуу ethicscontact@qut.edu.au хаягаар харилцаж болно гэдгийг ойлгосон

- Судалгааны ажил оролцооныг зөвшөөрсөн
- Насанд хүрээгүйчүүдийг судалгаанд хамруулах: хэрэв таны хүүхдүүд хамардагдах бол юу хийх шаардлагатай талаар зөвлөлдөж болно
- Судалгааны ажилд дуу бичлэг, дурс бичлэг хийнэ гэдгийг ойлгосон. Та хүүхдээ зураг авах, дурс бичлэг хийлгээд оролцуулахыг хусэхгүй байгаа бол дор санаалаа бичнэ үү.

Нэр

Гарын үсэг

Санал

Он, сар, одор / /

/ / /
## Appendix M: A Glossary of Mongolian Terms Used

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mongolian word/phrase (transliterated)</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aimag</td>
<td>Province</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Airag</td>
<td>A fermented festive drink made from milk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bagshi</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bogd Khan</td>
<td>Last khan of the Mongol Ults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buuz</td>
<td>Steamed dumplings filled with meat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinggisid</td>
<td>Descendants of Chinggis Khaan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deel</td>
<td>Traditional high-collared coat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Etugen</td>
<td>Earth Mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ezen</td>
<td>Notion of authority as master</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gal golomt</td>
<td>Fireplace at the heart of the ger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gazariin ezen</td>
<td>Lesser spirit entities attached to various features of the cosmos known as masters of the land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ger</td>
<td>Traditional nomadic tent home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ger ail</td>
<td>Family of one ger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geriin ezen</td>
<td>Master of the ger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geriin yos</td>
<td>Customs and rules to do with being in and around the ger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gerlekh</td>
<td>Marriage; means to establish a home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hoshuu</td>
<td>Division of steppe lands during the era of Manchu rule, similar to European fiefdoms or Chinese banners, also referred to as nutag by Mongolians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ikh Zasag</td>
<td>Literally the great law of Chinggis Khaan and the Mongol Empire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iluu oir dotno</td>
<td>Very close communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khlaan</td>
<td>Supreme ruler of the Mongol Empire, or the khan of khans, sometimes called khagan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khan</td>
<td>Nomadic polity leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khan aimag</td>
<td>Territories each with their own Chinggisid khan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khoimor</td>
<td>Most honoured place where sacred objects and valued images are kept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khot ail</td>
<td>Literally town/city family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khot ail’iin ami neg.</td>
<td>Families living close together as khot ail have one life, and are neighbours with one mind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saakhalt ailiin sanaa neg</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khural</td>
<td>Gathering of leaders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khuree</td>
<td>Large livestock-keeping groups united for economic, military and territorial administration purposes whose many ger would be arranged in a circle for defence purposes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Mongol Ults                           | 1. Mongol polity, realm or patrimony; Mongolia  
<pre><code>                                  | 2. Mongol people; Mongolians |
</code></pre>
<p>| Morin khuur                           | Literally meaning horse-head violin |
| Naadam                                | Mongolian festival of competing sports |
| Negdel                                | District community during the socialist era that superseded traditional social structures; herding equivalent of Russian-style military camps |
| Nutag                                 | Allocated homeland; birthplace |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mongolian word/phrase (transliterated)</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nutugiin ezen</td>
<td>Banner prince, a leader from the Chinggisid lineage; literally master of the homeland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nüüdliin yos</td>
<td>Adaptation of <em>geriin yos</em> for the time of a seasonal migratory move</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oir dotno</td>
<td>Close communication (also close relationship)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ovoo</td>
<td>Traditional nomadic stone cairns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shavi</td>
<td>Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surgaal</td>
<td>Words and acts of a person, their sayings and doings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surtakhuan</td>
<td>Personal ethics based on a relational construction of moral exemplarity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suu</td>
<td>Milk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suutei tsai</td>
<td>Salty tea with milk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenggeri, Munkh Tenggeri</td>
<td>Sky Father, Eternal Heaven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenggerism</td>
<td>Relationship between the khaan and <em>Munkh Tenggeri</em> and the conceptualizations surrounding this</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tsagaan sar</td>
<td>Mongolian lunar new year festival</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tseer</td>
<td>Explicit taboos that prevent someone’s lack of understanding from disturbing the natural order and balance of things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tumen</td>
<td>Mongol army unit of 10,000 Mongol horsemen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ulger</td>
<td>Combination of the ideal represented by the moral exemplar, or teacher, and his/her words or deed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xoollox yos</td>
<td>Rules for food</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yadargaa</td>
<td>Fatigue-related illness that results from lifestyle imbalance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yos</td>
<td>Mongolian customs and rules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yos surtakhuan</td>
<td>Translation of the English term “morality”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zasag</td>
<td>Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zasag noyon</td>
<td>Lord of the patrimonial fief</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix N: Selection of Photographs of Mongolia

Father and young son herding animals.  The inside of a modern ger.

Khot ail in the countryside.  The 40m high Chinggis Khaan monument.

A shaman making a milk libation.  An ovoo on a mountain top.
One of the ger districts in the capital city.

New apartment blocks in the capital city.

Travelling through the countryside.

The Golden Buddha and the Socialist Worker’s Monument.