SCHOOL-AS-COMMUNITY: BRIDGING THE GAP TO SUSTAINABILITY

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This thesis is presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of Murdoch University
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I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content, work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution.

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Sandra Joyce Wooltorton
ABSTRACT

In this research I explore ways in which teachers and parents can enhance the sustainability agenda to bridge the gap towards sustainability through the creation of caring, democratic, just, ecologically regenerative schools-as-communities. I learned that we can only transform ourselves and not others, therefore to transform the model of experience of schooling and society, we need to transform ourselves, the whole community of the school, towards sustainability. This follows the work of Sterling (2001, 2002a and 2002b) which illustrates that education and society will need to change together in a mutually affirming way, since there is no linear cause-effect relationship.

This dissertation focuses on one aspect of the developing field of education for sustainability (EfS). I use radical ecology as the philosophy which supports the vision of community transformation towards sustainability (Orr 2002; Fien 2001; and Sterling 2001). I use the emancipatory research paradigm and detail a participatory epistemology fused with a holistic, constructivist notion of reality, to situate a participative approach which enables important interdisciplinary connections to be made. The research comprises ethnographic research and cooperative inquiry projects that were implemented at two small community schools, as well as reflective practice to develop personal and professional practices of sustainability. Contemporary work in the field of EfS has a cultural understanding of sustainability, which uses four pillars: the biophysical, the social-cultural, the economic and the political. The political pillar is the key organising principle for this research.

The research is significant because I develop and build upon Sterling’s (2001) notion of transformative learning for sustainability. I show that participatory structures, procedures and processes are necessary, but not sufficient for a socially transformative school-as-community culture and that socio-ecologically contextualised knowing is transformative knowledge about community sustainability. For people to behave in
cooperative ways, they need to develop a practical, reconnector knowledge of cooperation. Likewise, for people to behave in ecologically regenerative ways, they need to develop a practical, reconnector knowledge of ecological reconnection. The research methods of reflective practice and cooperative inquiry are discussed and evaluated as vehicles for transformation towards sustainability. The dissertation thereby assesses their effectiveness in enabling the development of practical knowledge about sustainability.

In Australia, over the last decade our federal government has shown little interest in fulfilling its own narrowly defined ecological sustainability policy commitments. In Western Australia, our government has recently launched a comprehensive State Sustainability Strategy however its major weakness is that it has afforded very low significance to education at a time when major international organisations such as UNESCO (2002b) see education as an integral part of sustainability and learning as a key to a sustainable future. Sadly, the State Sustainability Strategy does not recommend a reorientation of the education system towards sustainability, does not incorporate a socially critical view of education, and almost completely overlooks the role of learning in the social task of change towards sustainability. In Western Australia, we urgently need policies and political action for commitment through structural reorientation towards EfS. Even in the face of this, a multi-perspectival, inclusive approach to the development of civil society through devolved, locally-based decision making and action within a school community can facilitate the emergence of learning for sustainability in that community. Even within a context of contradiction, tension and paradox, it is possible for school communities to contribute to sustainability through reconnector transformative learning.
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CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Overview

In this research my chief concern is to explore ways in which the school community can enhance the sustainability agenda to bridge the gap towards sustainability. The photograph below demonstrates levels of theorising beyond those used at the World Economic Forum in Melbourne on September 11, 2000. Swimme and Berry (1994, 250) name these contrasting modes as meta-theories - the Entrepreneur versus the Ecologist. The force of globalised business (with the protection of the military) maintains its organisation facing against humanity and nature - a woman offering a frangipani flower.

Plate 1: Illustrates meta-theories in antipathy. Photograph taken by Reed (2000) in Melbourne, of demonstrations against globalisation.

Through the meta-theory of the entrepreneur, by and large education systems “sustain unsustainability” (Sterling, 2001, 14). It is a fact that the most highly educated nations leave the deepest ecological footprints and have the highest per head rates of
consumption (UNESCO, 2002a). With the project of enhancing the sustainability
agenda, I use the philosophy of radical ecology\(^1\) and the educational framework of
education for sustainability (EfS)\(^2\). In the empirical core of the research I explore
transformation practices through three studies. These are: an ethnographic study of the
dynamics of a participative school community; a cooperative inquiry project to explore
the task of developing a cooperative school community; and two smaller connected
studies using reflective practice and cooperative inquiry to explore the task of enhancing
the ecological self. I embed each study in a short literature review, firstly to illustrate
the overarching tension and show what specific character of unsustainability needs
transforming in that particular domain. My further aim with the short literature review
for each study is introduce the relevant propositional knowledge of sustainability as a
foundation for the further development of propositional and practical knowledge.

My thesis is that schools need not maintain present hierarchical, non-participative, non-
reflective modes – they can be transformed into socially and ecologically regenerative
communities by school teachers and parents in a holistic, multi-dimensional way. The
problem is that whilst people have considerable propositional knowledge about the
ecological and social crises of our times and even of the overarching tensions explored
in the dissertation, which are individualism, hierarchy and egoism, we do not have the
practical knowledge of transformation. I claim that generally, we do not know how to be
transformative or how and where to begin to work in different, sustaining ways. The
transformation practices used in this research together with their implications provide a
substantial contribution towards understanding how communities may bridge the gap to
sustainability. These transformation practices supplement the work being carried out by
radical ecology and EfS theorists and practitioners. They add to work in the field of
socio-ecological transformation including Macy and Young-Brown (1998), Sterling
reflect on practical approaches towards transforming the schooling process into a
school-as-community process.

Thus in addition to the transformation practices themselves, through the lens of the
emancipatory paradigm there are significant outcomes of the research for EfS. These are

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\(^1\) Radical ecology is a radical tradition of theorising which is underpinned by a strong sense of ecological interconnectedness. Its
major strands are described in Appendix One.
firstly an affirmation of the political pillar of sustainability as the organising principle for school-community change and learning sustainability (Fien, 2001, 4; UNESCO, 2002b, 8; and Sterling, 2001) and secondly a recommendation to broaden the concept of ‘school’ to become ‘school-as-community’. This research shows that the political pillar as organising principle facilitates learning towards sustainability in a school-as-community, through the development of collective and individual know how of sustainability. This underpins a process-oriented understanding of sustainability, suggesting a rethinking of education as sustainability. In this view, we learn sustainability (Sterling, 2001, 61; Scott, 2002, 1-2; UNESCO, 2002b, 7).

1.1 Introduction to the Research

This introductory chapter is in two sections. In the first part I introduce the research and the need for transformation towards sustainability, before introducing the design of the dissertation in section two. The research has been implemented in a regional city and a rural town in the south west of Western Australia. While its implications for schooling in Western Australia are directly examined in this dissertation, they are likely to correlate with schooling situations in most parts of Australia and to have parallels throughout western societies.

Stevenson writes:

The challenge is to find a more equitable, just, economically and environmentally sustainable worldview. This task demands changes in the ways of thinking, working and living that currently dominate most Western societies, particularly as they relate to the global economy and the relationships with Third World nations. (2002, 192)

As Fien and Tilbury (2002, 6) say, we can only successfully change the things we have most time to work on, which for most of us is ourselves and our local communities. Fien and Tilbury say that the sustainability challenge requires learning and action to ensure that as many people as possible participate in the making of decisions concerning them. I use the idea of participative decision-making to address the challenge to reorient schools towards sustainability.

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Footnote: It is introduced historically in chapter three.
For at least thirty years I can remember it being said that the next generation will have the knowledge and skills to address the environmental crises due to the environmental education programs being carried out in schools. While it is certainly true that we have made much progress in terms of environmental awareness, it is not enough. Collectively, we have not yet begun to slow the ecological destruction, let alone make satisfactory progress on restoration. One explanation for this situation is that children learn their culture from those around them - the family, extended family, community, media and schools. Children do not necessarily do what we tell them, they do what we do! Therefore we – teachers and parents - must transform our practices together with our communities. This is also an application of the precautionary principle, which is interpreted by UNESCO to mean that it would be unwise to wait for the present generation to grow up, since it is today’s adults who need to “make change rather than simply maintaining the ecological status quo” (2002b, 37).

Referring generally to western processes of schooling, Walker and Webster state that schools are ecologically and socially unsustainable establishments. They operate as monopolies beholden to controlling elite (1998). O'Sullivan details the links between education and planetary crises:

Our present educational institutions which are in line with, and feeding into industrialism, nationalism, competitive transnationalism, individualism and patriarchy must be fundamentally called into question (1999, 7).

In the meta-theory of the Entrepreneur (Swimme and Berry, 1994, 250) these elements are combined as a worldview in which the crises we are now facing are exacerbated. O’Sullivan explains:

From the mechanistic and individualistic worldview, that creates nature as a mechanism, we ultimately see the subversion of the integral life community, supposedly for our own advantage. In the process, we have torn apart the life system itself. (1999, 224)

In order to change our society's self-destructive path away from the more negative forces of globalisation and towards a survival oriented culture, education must be vitally concerned with creating a sustainable future. There is wide international agreement that education is the most effective way to confront the challenges of bringing about a

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1 Ideally, media would change too. However as school community participants we can change our own actions and influence those around us. Changing the media would greatly help in the project of transformation towards sustainability, but it is not the task of this dissertation.
sustainable future (for example UNESCO, 1997a, 3; UNEP, 1992a, 2; Yencken and Wilkinson, 2000, 346).

1.1.1 The Need for Sustainability

Sustainability is not just about 'the environment' but about the future of individuals and whole societies. It is not a separate agenda, but the agenda which affects all; one which we are foolhardy to ignore and wise to engage with. It is a question of survival, security, and well-being. (Sterling, 2002b)

In this section I use a series of brief examples to illustrate interlocking political, social and ecological violence. This will elucidate Sterling’s statement that sustainability is the agenda. Following, is an explanation of why I have chosen to research the topic of transformation towards sustainability. The planet is beset by deep crises. From pole to pole synthetic chemical pollution is rife through all of nature including human bodies and is concentrated in breast-fed babies (SBS TV, 2001). The Australian Prime Minister John Howard refuses to say 'sorry' to Aboriginal people, a stance considered by many people to be an intentional stalling of the process of reconciliation (Fraser, 2000). Because of the horrific terrorist attack on the USA on September 11, 2001 the USA government declared a 'war on terror' which apparently justified a shocking attack on Afghanistan followed by Iraq. Megatonnes of sophisticated bombs were dropped upon countries already damaged by years of war. Roy writes:

The USA government, and no doubt governments all over the world, will use the climate of war as an excuse to curtail civil liberties, deny free speech, lay off workers, harass ethnic and religious minorities, cut back on public spending and divert huge amounts of money to the defence industry (September 29, 2001).

Roy's prediction has already begun to manifest in Australia. Many commentators believe that the November, 2001 re-election of the Liberal Party's John Howard as the Australian Prime Minister for a third term was achieved on the basis of an appeal to racism and fear rather than principled leadership (Kelly, 2001, Adams, 2001). Meanwhile pacifists throughout the world who are engaged in the global-justice movement fear that they will be labelled as terrorists, with the result that their right to protest democratically will be curtailed because of their opposition to economic globalisation (Starhawk, 2001).
Australia and the USA refuse to sign the Kyoto Protocol, which is an attempt to come to international agreement about emissions of greenhouse gases (Hodge and Wilson, 2001). USA spokespersons have stated that because developing countries will not be required to comply with reduced emissions standards, the USA will not comply either (ABC News, 3/4/01). In 1989, Exxon created the worst oil spill in history through the Exxon-Valdez oil tanker disaster (R.I.C. Publications, n.d.). In October 2001, Exxon-Mobil became "the most profitable in the history of human endeavour" (Borger and McAlister, 2001). Borger and McAlister write that Exxon-Mobil is unconvinced of any evidence of global warming and it has conducted an "aggressive and expensive" public relations campaign on the subject. According to Borger and McAlister Exxon-Mobil provided $2.3 million to help elect President Bush, whose administration is now staffed with ex-oil executives. Sachs told the Forum 2000 in Prague:

We all understand and are shaken by the tragedy of September 11th but I think it is important that we must not lose attention to the fact that every day 11,000 people around the world, day in and day out, are dying of AIDS though it is a treatable disease. That every day, day in day out, 8,000 people are dying of readily vaccine preventable diseases, diseases that don't even exist in the rich countries any more and yet are killing millions in the poor countries for lack of a measles immunization. We should understand that every day 8,000 people are dying of malaria in Africa though we can cure that disease but it doesn't reach the vast majority of people. When our commission added up these facts we found the most appalling realization that the world stands by, as 16 million people die every year of curable and preventable diseases for lack of the most minimal coverage of health services... But, Ladies and Gentlemen, the most amazing fact of all this in my view is how the very richest country in the world, the United States, my own country, has failed to engage on this issue. As the US calls on the world for help, for solidarity, for community, the simple fact of the matter is that the world's richest, greatest, most technologically advanced, most powerful country does the least as a share of its income on behalf of the world's poor. And what's more, that share has been falling for the last two decades not rising. The world long ago established a norm that the rich countries should give 0.7 of 1% of their GDP for help of the world's poor countries. Since the rich countries have a combined annual income of over 25 trillion dollars, were we to do that, the annual amount of support would be some 175 billion dollars per year easily enough to address the challenges of basic help, of universal education, of environmental degradation, of agricultural research and productivity, of promotion of a safe environment... As Shimon Peres said, the world has never been richer, never more capable, and never more technologically able to address these ills as it is today. We stand with the possibility to save
millions and millions of lives per year, *if we simply care to make the effort*. (Sachs, October, 2001, my emphasis)

Sachs was formerly a Harvard economist and is now a panellist on the World Health Organisation (Summers, 2001).

In the face of apparent lack of political will and widespread naivety about the scale of the changes we need to make, there are many questions deeply felt by social activists, teachers, parents and community workers. What can we do to prompt ecological and social change? How can we facilitate people to become aware? What can I do in my own life? Along with millions of others around the world, I feel concern, sorrow and aggravation at the critical state of the planet and the visibly little being implemented by governments and citizens to make changes. After interviewing hundreds of scientists, Suzuki and Dressel (1999, 38) write that humanity is on a suicidal path because the limits to our capacity to consume from nature have long been exceeded. Social and environmental violence and injustice seems to be tolerated throughout the planet.

Signs of accelerated ecological decline have coincided with a loss of political momentum on environmental issues… 27 percent of the world's coral reefs have been lost, suggesting that some of the planet's key ecological systems are in decline... Environmental degradation is also leading to more severe natural disasters…. … Environmental decline is also exacting a toll on people. Even after a decade of declining poverty in many nations, 1.2 billion people lack access to clean water and hundreds of millions breathe unhealthy air. And poor people in countries such as the Philippines and Mexico are pushed to destroy forests and coral reefs in a desperate effort to raise living standards. … Mobilizing the worldwide response needed to bring destructive environmental trends under control is a daunting task…*But people have surmounted great challenges before, from the abolition of slavery in the 19th century, to the enfranchisement of women in the early twentieth. Change can move quickly from impossible to inevitable.* (World Watch Institute, January 13, 2001, my emphasis)

As articulated in the World Watch Institute report cited above, the planet is at the crossroads - politically, ecologically, and socially. In my optimistic moments I agree with the closing sentiment in the quotation. From my perspective it is a struggle to remain optimistic, but rationally I know that there is no other choice but to believe that change is possible. Even as I write these words, I am critically aware that it is comparatively easy for me to be optimistic. I live a privileged life with my family, in the forest near the Indian Ocean in the south west of Western Australia. At the same time, I know that
others spend their whole lives eking out an existence in municipal dumps, on toxic land, in violent, polluted, run-down sections of cities, in war zones, or in impoverished farming communities. There are people who are enslaved to transnational corporations and people who are constantly hungry and malnourished, no longer able to supply their own food (Shiva, 2000, 2001; Suzuki, 1999). I doubt that these people are optimistic that there will be improvement in their circumstances, in their local economies or ecosystems. However I can do something to make a difference and this dissertation is put forward in the hope that it will help.

In this dissertation, I take the general critique of business-as-usual as a given. In order to illuminate business-as-usual, I shall put forward Fox's (1990, 36 - 67) development of the biblical story of Jacob's ladder as metaphor for the business-as-usual world-view. In Christian spirituality according to Fox, Jacob's ladder represents the hierarchical quest for perfection and success, which is gained at the cost of compassion, nurturing, caring and earthiness. It arises from the notion of climbing the ladder to ascend to God away from earth and looking upwards, in contrast to descending to people and looking earthwards. Compassion and neighbourliness are seen as earth-bound in this view. Fox (1990, 37) indicates that this is a particularly Christian interpretation. In the Jewish tradition, Jacob's dream was interpreted only as a prophecy that he would have many children who would spread themselves out in every direction and would one day return to the land they are fleeing. Fox (1990, 40) writes that historical Christian mystics were influenced by Hellenistic and not biblical sources and gives the example that Plato's conception of reality was the hierarchical one of beginning with the concrete and progressing through the mental to the abstract prototypes, the ideas.

The qualities Fox (1990, 45) uses to describe the resultant ladder climbing mentality, are up/down, flat Earth, climbing, Sisyphean, competition, restrictive, elitist, survival of the fittest, hierarchical, violent, sky-oriented, ruthlessly independent, jealous and judgment-oriented, abstract, distant-making, linear, ladder-like, theistic, love of neighbour is separate from love of what is at the top. Fox illustrates that in the Jacob's ladder dynamic where there is only up or down, there is always a sense of not having arrived, still further to go. Every time one arrives at a new rung there is still another, then another. Ladder climbing has built-in competition because only a few can be on a
ladder at once or it will fall, particularly so near the top where it is susceptible to top-heaviness. In Fox's words:

'The bigger they are, the harder they fall', meaning that the higher up one is the more dangerous is the fall. On a ladder one studies one's competition and knows well exactly who is on the rung above and who is pushing from below. Competition and combat are intrinsic to ladder climbing. (1990, 47)

In Fox's metaphor, egos are heavily involved. The ladder makes for inevitable elitism because only a few can survive at the top. Likewise it is full of insecurity because once people obtain a rung it must be preserved. The structure of the ladder is preserved by means of sacralising the 'upness' on the ladder, which is actually the true meaning of hierarchy. (This position is well illustrated by Rupert Murdoch, whose few public words before an election command the attention of the Australian prime minister as well as the leader of the opposition.) The sacredness of the 'up' normalises actions and interactive behaviour so that competence and responsibility count for nothing when hierarchy is invoked. This position is intrinsically violent due to the fact that the higher up one has ascended, the smaller others look when one looks down. Similarly when one is high up, one cannot look lower-runged others in the face. Ladder climbing requires ruthless independence. Rugged individualism, according to Fox (1990, 49) is the basic survival spirit. Indeed, too much care and empathy could make one tumble. When climbing the ladder, one's own hands are busy with one's own precarious survival so that it is dangerous to help others. If one is high up the ladder, helping others can put one's life in jeopardy. Likewise when climbing, one is progressively increasing the distance from Earth and from what binds us all. It is increasingly abstract and distant, separating the one from the others because it is only linear.

In the first place, the ladder presumes a separation between people and God which necessitates the climbing towards Godliness and away from people. Men, according to Fox (1990, 37), are more susceptible to the trap of the ladder, having the effect of separating them from women, children and the earth as they climb. In conclusion, Fox (1990, 65) suggests that the worship of upness, phallicism, is America's principal religion, orienting business-as-usual towards hierarchical, violent, unhearing, unseeing, uncaring upness. Fox's antithesis to Jacob's ladder is Sarah's circle, which I shall

4 I use the term ‘business-as-usual’ to refer to the dominant tradition of theorising and everyday practice of countries of the north.
introduce in more detail as a metaphor for radical ecology in chapter two. Briefly, Sarah's Circle is a biblical story of creativity, birthing, fruitfulness and divine wisdom rather than human knowledge. Fox works with it as a dynamic image of circle dancing. Sarah's Circle is a remedy for some of the problems that Jacob's ladder brings because whilst ladder climbing is up/down and is intrinsically competitive and combative, in circle dancing there are no winners and losers since it is about sharing ecstasies. The circle is intrinsically democratic and non-violent because people can look into the eyes of each other. The individual and collective transformation from business-as-usual, metaphorically Jacob's ladder, towards radical ecology and sustainability, metaphorically Sarah's circle, is substantial. Swimme and Berry (1994, 250) aver that a change of consciousness is required to achieve this task.

1.1.2 Why Do This Research?

I have an unwavering confidence and belief in the potential and fortitude of teachers and parents to gently and persistently transform the dominant paradigm of neo-liberal economic determinism through their everyday lives and work. My confidence and belief is founded upon my research for this dissertation as well as my everyday knowing through practical experience with organisations of teachers and social researchers. As stated by Reason and Bradbury:

…conscious, action-oriented people, especially those working and reasoning together, can indeed achieve systematic and systemic change through time. (2001, 449)

Reason (2000) asks that action researchers address the question of how we decide what is worthy of our attention and what is worthwhile. I decided to answer the question of how to work towards a more sustainable world because I think/feel/contemplate/ruminate about it, consciously and unconsciously, most of the time. As an individual and collaboratively I do much to contribute towards sustainability, and I wish to do more. I have a deep awareness that the actions of the privileged minority of which I am one, cause unfathomable injustices to the majority of the human and more than human world. The knowing hurts me profoundly. The transforming path is one of communion with the living, breathing, pulsating world while experiencing and holding the pain to act for the world in solidarity, strength and

\(^{1}\) See, for example, Beazley (2001, 12).
wisdom (Macy, 1998). So this research is something of a spiritual journey. The research will not conclude when this dissertation is submitted, but its form will continue to evolve.

1.2 About the Dissertation

After reviewing how radical ecology as a philosophical framework reflects contemporary subjectivity and presenting EfS as a developing framework for education, this dissertation is written around three projects. These elaborate participative community dynamics, intentional cooperative transformation and enhancement of the ecological self. The dissertation begins with the community dynamics project, follows with community development and then turns to the project on the self, because the nature of writing is linear. It is not because community is considered more or less important than the arena of the self for transformation towards sustainability. In the academic field of radical ecology, there is debate as to whether the shift to sustainability begins within the arena of community or the arena of self (for example Barns, 1997). I do not intend to argue this point because the argument seems pointless. Everyone and every context are different (Clover, 2002). Further, I contend that there cannot be progress towards sustainability in one arena without progress in each of the other arenas. We need integrated, multi-dimensional, multi-perspectival transformation. I began the research with the domain of the participative school community because, of the four pillars of sustainability which are the biophysical, social and cultural, economic and political (Fien, 2001, 4 and UNESCO, 2002b, 8), politics (in the sense of participative decision-making) provides an organising principle from which to begin.

For the community study, I critique individualism before describing an ethnographic research project at a school I shall call Forest School. This study focuses on patterns and structures of relationships between people in a community and shows that communitarian aspirations can be reached through a strong school community focus. I follow the community study with the study of cooperative community development in chapter seven. I critique hierarchy in relationships as background for a cooperative inquiry research project to develop a cooperative dynamic at a school I call Riverdale School. This research focuses on the task of transforming a school community towards
cooperation. The second and third part of chapter seven is my third-person account of the research (Torbert, 2001, 256 and Reason, 2000). The group's original account of the research is a report to the Riverdale School Board and is appended to the dissertation.

In chapter eight, I critically examine egoism before implementing the ecological self research. After a literature review to situate the project, I apply the knowledge from the ethnography and the cooperative inquiry projects through a further cooperative inquiry project at Forest School approximately one year after the initial ethnographic investigation. Within the chapter is my third-person report of the project. The chapter also uses excerpts from my own reflective practice journal, as a first-person research account of the development of the ecological self. A point of central significance in the research is the recognition and transformation of hierarchical relationships to those of authentic cooperation. This recognition was first verbalised by the cooperative inquiry group at Riverdale School, therefore heightened awareness of hierarchy in relationships together with the crafting of cooperative relationships, were developed as practical knowledge by the group.

1.2.1 Research Design

I frame the research with radical ecology as the philosophical framework and education for sustainability (EfS) as the education framework. The research paradigm is emancipatory, and the approach is participative (Reason, 2000). The methodology is transformative human inquiry (Heron, 1996) and the two main research methods used are ethnography and cooperative inquiry.

Ecological design is the art that reconnects us as sensuous creatures evolved over millions of years to a beautiful world. That world does not need to be remade but rather revealed. To do that, we do not need research as much as the rediscovery of old and forgotten things. ...Our greatest needs have ... to do with heart, wisdom, thankfulness, and generosity of spirit and these virtues are part of larger ecologies that embrace spirit, body, and mind – the beginning of design. (Orr 2002, 32)

I consider my research design to be ecological.

My voice as the writer is informed by self-reflective (Marshall, 2001) and critically reflective (Smyth, 2001) journaling as life-process. 'I' am the reflective practitioner, the researcher who, through inner and outer arks of attention, designed and drew the project together. I identify with, and sit comfortably with Marshall's notion of 'researcher as
social activist'. Marshall's description of self-reflective practice includes the notion of research as political process. Smyth sharpens the political process notion by saying:

Reflection, as I want to deal with it here, is not related at all to passive deliberation or contemplation - a meaning which is sometimes ascribed to reflection in everyday life. Rather, what I am arguing for is a notion of the reflective that is both active and militant... and that is above all concerned with infusing action with a sense of power and politics, and which reintroduces into the discourse about teaching and schooling a concern for the "ethical, personal and political", (2001, 183, 184, my emphasis)

I try to hold the "active and militant" spirit in a large way in this dissertation. Likewise I engage the "passive deliberation or contemplation" spirit of reflection, particularly with the work on the ecological self. Both are essential, and in fact implicit in the methodology adopted for this research.

This is direction oriented rather than goal directed research, in that the process is more significant than the goal. The process is consistent with the ethics of radical ecology, which is concerned with the flourishing of human and more than human nature through the deepening of democracy and justice. The goal is to seek a sustainable world through the work of schools. A sustainable world is one in which humans and more than humans flourish through the deepening of democracy and all forms of justice. In a sustainable world, humans will be part of the web of life as citizens of the biotic community (Orr, 2001, 8). Core values of sustainability include community, sufficiency, locality, equity, health, democracy, justice and diversity (Sterling, 2001, 16).

Research question

My overarching research question is broad. How can school people (parents, teachers, school administrators, and children) help to create a more sustainable future? I have deliberately kept the question broad because I wished to keep the 'big picture' in constant view. I wanted to maintain this broad perspective so that community and individual actions can be seen to have a planetary outcome. Related questions are:

What can teachers do to cause/trigger/instigate/initiate/produce/lead to transformation towards sustainability? That is, how can we bring about a sustainable world?
What can parents do to bring about a sustainable world, together with our children’s school community?

Can we extend the notions of community education and community schooling so that a school-as-community is able to develop into an ecologically and socially regenerative community with a focus on sustainability?

How can education and society change together in a mutually affirming way, towards more sustainable patterns for both? (Sterling, quoted in Paden, 2000b, 2)

**Research Paradigm**

I use the emancipatory research paradigm, because I intend this research to be as radical as it could be. I wish to work with teachers, researchers and school communities who are, in one way or another, working “against the grain” (Simon, 1992) in an effort to bring about a more sustainable world. I shall endeavour to discover how these school communities do what they do, and assist with the task of figuring out how to go even further – to intentionally work further towards a world that will be kinder, more caring, ecologically safe and economically sane, more just, more democratic, and one that will be more fitting for the ecos, for our children and their children as well as for ourselves. Kinchelow and McLaren (1994, 144) argue that critical research is the transgressive task of posing itself as a set of ideological practices. Guba and Lincoln (1994, 112) write that the inquiry aim of the critical research paradigm is “critique and transformation: restitution and emancipation”. They write that the criterion for progress over time is that restitution and emancipation should take place and endure. My research is underpinned by a set of ideological practices and my task is the transgressive one of transformation towards sustainability.

**Research Approach**

The research approach will be participatory. This approach, according to Reason (2000) honours the rights of humans and more than humans, and challenges us to discover new ways of ‘knowing’ and new methodologies to help in the project of discovering new ways of integrating mind with matter and epistemology with politics.
Methodology

The methodology I use is that of transformative human inquiry, informed by Reason (1988, 2000), Reason and Bradbury (2001) and Heron (1996). For my research design, I needed a methodology that would facilitate the search for the transformative bridge to sustainability, therefore the methodology needed to be transformative itself. It would need to develop a form of knowing that is at once experiential, propositional and wise, one that is deeply grounded in experience, theory and reflection, or the sensory, the rational and the contemplative (Wilber, 1996, 5). To engage the three ways of knowing we need the contemplative, the deeply peaceful, in order to incorporate the mystical. We need the rational in order to be critical and militant, and we need the sensory, the body, in order to act. Importantly, the methodology would need to be able to facilitate my own transformation, since I recognised that the transformation could not be 'out there' without also being 'in here'. Heron (1996, 48) suggests that inquiries are essentially informative or transformative. Informative or descriptive inquiries produce propositional knowledge\(^6\) about experience, whereas transformative inquiries have a practical focus and are transformative of the experience. This thesis called for the transformative inquiry form.

The methodology of transformative human inquiry is underpinned by an understanding of the deep connectedness between people and nature as well as people and people. It presumes that with intentional personal and social learning, deeper bonds of shared, meaningful, empathetic communication about people’s lived experience may be revealed. Within this real communication about lived experience, intentional transformation in a variety of ways is expected to be possible. This methodology accepts that truth and action are fully interdependent, existing in a social matrix of constructed meanings, so that subsequent actions are allocated meanings. It aims to be collaborative, participative, self-critical and critically intersubjective (Heron, 1996). Because the methodology attempts to probe into the future (Carr and Kemmis, 1986, 185) it is necessarily emergent. Its progress cannot be predetermined or programmed. As Stirling says about sustainable education, change is influenced by the journey of

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\(^6\) Propositional knowledge is intellectual knowledge, organised conceptually so that it is logical and defensible. It is 'knowing about', perhaps on the basis of studying or having been told. This is where universities excel! We may 'know all about' something, such as sustainability, but it does not follow that we necessarily have any 'know-how' at all! 'Know-how' with the knack, is practical knowledge, gained through cycles of action and reflection. The result is an integration of substantial experience, dialogue, doing,
change, and emergent properties can be designed for, but not predicted (2001, 80). Orr says: “the goal of ecological design is not a journey to some utopian destiny, but is rather more like a homecoming (Orr, 2002, 30)”. The methodological assumptions behind this research are in line with Orr’s notion of ecological design.

**Research Methods**

The research methods enable design for flexibility and emergence. I can design for, but not predict the qualities and outcomes of this research. The research methods that I believe are most suitable for use in this research are ethnography and cooperative inquiry. I incorporate reflective practice as an inner arc of reflection (Marshall, 2001) to continuously review my practice, to consider emergent learning and change, and develop my ecological self. The research is grounded in my own life experience, thus I use a reflective journaling practice to progressively design and redesign the research to enable the progressive incorporation of learning and to connect my own experiences with the transformative experiences of collaborative participants.

The research objective was to work very closely with two small schools which emphasise teacher/parent integration, which take community development seriously, which profess to use democratic process as part of the decision-making structure of the school, which profess a holistic approach to education, and which specifically incorporate environmental education as part of the curriculum of the school. One school was chosen as being well established (Forest School) and another as a new school (Riverdale School). As a researcher, I wished to learn about community processes from the established school using naturalistic, ethnographic methods. Unstructured interviews would be used to converse with elders, parents and teachers about the nature, progress, history and culture of the school. My intention was to document the community culture in order to learn about the lived experiences and interpretations of the participants in regard to cooperation and participation.

On the basis of this knowledge, cooperative inquiry would be used to work with Riverdale School, the school new at the time of the research, to enable self- and collaborative reflective practice for new learning towards sustainable school thinking and deliberately planned actions about a subject. Practical knowledge is the consummation of experiential, presentational and propositional knowledge. It means that we 'know all about' as well as 'know-how' (Heron, 1996).
community. The research aimed to apply the propositional knowledge learned through Forest School, whilst exploring cooperative inquiry as a method of transformation of a school community. A subsequent, smaller cooperative inquiry research project at Forest School further explored the potential of the method. This followed the Riverdale School project, and was designed to explore cooperative inquiry as a process to research enhancement of the ecological self.

In the table below, I show the domains of focus in each research step. Alongside is listed the research method used to explore each domain, the location for each study, and the chapter in the dissertation in which it is presented.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Research Intention</th>
<th>Research Method</th>
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<td>Ethnography</td>
<td>Forest School</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop a school community towards cooperation</td>
<td>Cooperative Inquiry</td>
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<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on enhancement of the ecological self</td>
<td>Reflective Practice, Cooperative Inquiry</td>
<td>Forest School</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
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Table 1. Overview of empirical research design and relevant chapter in dissertation

For the eight years since beginning this dissertation, I have spent one year as a researcher only and three years as a researcher and school teacher. For four years I was a full-time university teacher educator and so involved in a wide variety of research projects. These projects developed my practical knowledge but have rated only a bare mention in this dissertation. Projects not directly included are a two year environmental education project with ten to twelve year old children, a cooperative inquiry project with the same children and a two year environmental education action research project with teacher education students. As the PhD project progressed, I began to see the importance of focusing on the adults of the school communities rather than the children. It is the adults who, in my opinion, need the transformation because children grow to be like us! Hence, the extended notion of school-as-community developed through the task of integrating EfS and community education.
1.2.2 Parameters of the Thesis

This dissertation is of relevance to most Western Australian state schools and directly applicable to small schools. As the brief section on the history of education in chapter three shows, radical education actions have traditionally been implemented outside the education systems. However, broadly applied this constraint potentially excludes about fifteen thousand state school teachers in Western Australia, or counting the Western Australian Catholic system, a total of about twenty thousand teachers. My conversations with systemic teachers in Western Australia enable me to understand that teachers do want to make a difference and want to know what they can do to bring about sustainability, but often do not know how or where to start. Just begin to imagine the difference to the planet that twenty thousand teachers in Western Australia alone could make, and add the remainder of the teachers across Australia, followed by the teachers in other nations of the north. Then, persist with that imagination and work with teachers to bring sustainable models into fruition through local practices of transformation, until all teachers are able to be transformative in their work and in our society. UNESCO (2002b) writes:

There are over 60 million teachers in the world, and every one is potentially a key agent for bringing about the changes in values and lifestyles needed for sustainable development.

That is the main reason why the dissertation is addressed to all teachers.

The research boundary is Western Australian small to medium sized schools. I refer to groups of adults and children who go to purpose-prepared schools during the day with the intention of providing the children with an education. It is particularly oriented towards those schools where the community subscribes to the world-view of business-as-usual. For example, it would be of use to most Western Australian schools but not of particular use to Aboriginal schools. The research is for schools where the children live with adult/s, most of whom have some interest in the children’s development and

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7 Systemic schools are part of an education system such as the Western Australian Department of Education. Non-systemic schools are independently administered and managed.

8 I use the understanding of the ‘north’ in a similar way to that now used in the New Internationalist (for example 2000, vol. 3 28 p.1), Davison (2001) and Warren (1994a, 2). That is, as the developed world; the minority world. It acknowledges the operations of corporations of the north in nations of the south, resulting in increasing rich/poor divides in many nations. I sometimes use or quote writers who use ‘west’ to refer to similar nations, such as Mathews (1994a), so I stay with the use of the term used by the writer concerned.

9 Aboriginal schools have been grappling with issues such as participation in school decision-making for many years. In addition, Aboriginal schools face a number of different issues such as the role and place of Aboriginal languages and culture in the school, as
therefore some interest in the school. Also, the research is for schools where the teachers, parents and children reside, temporarily or permanently within commuting distance of the school. The research considers ordinary Western Australian schools because it is intended to be of interest to Western Australian teachers, parents, advisers and policy makers who ask what they can do to bring about a peaceful, just, socially and ecologically sustainable world. This dissertation is underpinned by the view that in order to change our society's self-destructive path towards a survival oriented culture; education must be vitally concerned with creating a sustainable future.

I wish to acknowledge that education is not the only systematic influence on children's lives. The home, the media and the social world are hugely influential in children's development and on culture. A typical Western Australian seventeen year old, upon high school graduation, will have spent about eleven and a half thousand hours in a classroom. At the very conservative estimate of three hours television per day, the typical seventeen year old will also have spent approximately thirteen thousand hours in front of a television or video during the same years. The typical student will have witnessed sales people selling deodorants, cars, alcohol and other 'must-haves', as well as the simulated violent deaths of several thousand people\(^{10}\). I acknowledge the potential impact of the media as an educative or socialising influence on children because if the material viewed contradicts the core values of sustainability, it is likely to have an oppositional impact on sustainability goals and visions.

The dissertation does not detail an educational pedagogy. However, I believe it is possible for children to skilfully use the media and technology so that they do not uncritically accept information from it. As the radical theorists of the seventies argued, children can learn to “detect crap” (for example, Postman and Weingartner, 1969). Likewise children (and adults) can learn how to use higher order thinking skills and critique so that they do not uncritically accept information from their social world (Freire, 1973). I agree with McLaren:

> We need to infuse critical pedagogy with a subversive power that is able to effect new cultural transgressions and that cannot be brought within the fateful orbit of commodity exchange. (1995, 258)

\(^{10}\) Orr (1992, 134) estimates that the typical US eighteen year old high school graduate will have witnessed eighteen thousand simulated violent deaths on television.
This point will not be addressed any further. Simply, the scope of this research is limited to the education context. However it will become clear later in the dissertation that the school, in partnership with the family and school community, can make considerable change in the social milieu.

**Chapter Summary**

In this first chapter I have briefly introduced the need for transformation towards sustainability, before describing the writing of the dissertation and research design. The first part of the chapter introduced the view that the planet is at the cross-roads - politically, ecologically and socially. It is possible that collectively, humanity can surmount this challenge (Meadows, Meadows and Randers, 1992; Suzuki, 2002). My research has been implemented with parents, teachers and education theorists and policy makers in mind, and it explores the role we can play in addressing the challenge of creating a sustainable future. It is particularly designed for those in school communities that subscribe to a world-view of business-as-usual, which is most Western Australian systemic schools, perhaps with the exception of Aboriginal community schools.

Chapters on subjectivity, the education for sustainability (EfS) movement, politics of schooling and the research paradigm follow this introduction and give wider scope to each of the important strands in this introduction. The dissertation is written around three domains: the dynamics of participative school community, the task of developing a cooperative school community and the task of enhancement of the ecological self. The three domains are presented as foci of the three research projects in chapters six to eight. Chapter six presents the dynamics of Forest School community, chapter seven the development of a cooperative community, and chapter eight the enhancement of the ecological self. There are two conclusion chapters in this dissertation. Chapter nine focuses on reorientation towards sustainability, whilst chapter ten reviews the democratic participatory approach on the basis of the research outcomes of this dissertation. Ways forward towards sustainability in Western Australia will require practical knowledge of how to develop a school-as-community process both to reorient towards sustainability and to enhance democratic participation.
CHAPTER TWO – WESTERN AUSTRALIA: CHILDHOOD, ECOLOGY, SUSTAINABILITY

In this chapter, I link my childhood in Western Australia to policies and the struggle towards sustainability. I present radical ecology as a personal, philosophical and political endeavour towards a goal of sustainability. In illustrating my subjectivity as a researcher, I describe my growing up as movement through deep ecology, through ecofeminism to ecological democracy. I then illustrate radical ecology as a union of positions, which are enhanced with the use of dialogical, empathetic knowledge approaches. Thirdly I review the extensive literature on sustainability together with international, Australian and Western Australian sustainability policies, and lead to a process approach as a way towards sustainability.

2.1 Researcher Subjectivity

Research is a political, ethical and personal enterprise (Fien, 2002, 245; Smyth, 2001, 183, 184). Because much of this section is a personal account, it is presented in a different type-face to the rest of the document. It is presented in journal form, and I hope that it will reflect the passion and commitment to ecological social change that is behind the words. As pointed out by Abram (1996, 32 – 34) there are no value free positions. Stevenson comments that story telling can serve as a form of narrative inquiry. He writes:

Stories and worldviews embody the assumptions we make about our societies and ourselves, about our public and private interests. They reveal not only how we experience and understand the world, but how we view the human condition and our relationships to each other and to nature, as well as what we see as progress or development. (2002, 187)

I want the introductory chapters to be an introduction to the research as well as an introduction to myself, the person who has created and directed the research since the research is contextualised within my own practical life experience. I also wish to include a brief personal-practical overview of radical ecology, so my personal introduction will serve this purpose as well.
In listing Heron's skills for informative and transformative inquiries in section 4.3.2 of Appendix Four, I add 'a brazen openness' about one's stance as a learner to the list. I am employing that brazenness now (with considerable trepidation!) in the inclusion of this section. In order to write this introduction to myself, I use the radical ecology theoretical frameworks of deep ecology, ecofeminism and ecological democracy to reflect 'backwards' over my life. The process of using these parameters enabled me to recognise the practical knowledge of radical ecology that I already had and to affirm those experiences. Perhaps the account might inspire others to engage a similar process in their reflections.

**2.1.1 A Childhood with Nature ~ Deep Ecology**

I was born in 1955 and spent the first ten years of my life living with my Australian mother, English father and siblings in Middle Swan, in the very outskirts of the Perth metropolitan area. My paternal grandparents (Nanna and Pop) lived two stones throw up our little street, Brown Street, which was about four stones throws from the Jane Brook. I spent many hours at Jane Brook catching tadpoles, watching eddies around the weed-covered rocks and not letting the leeches stick onto my skin. In winter, Jane Brook was quite muddy, much higher and maybe dangerous, so I wasn’t allowed there alone, which didn’t really matter because the drain at the front of our house filled up and there were abundant tadpoles and other good things to watch. I went to Nanna and Pop’s house any time I wanted to. Everything was safe - I could go out at any time and the neighbours would look out for me, too. All the parents looked out for all the kids. I often played with Lisa, my friend from next door, and several other families with lots of children.

We lived in a neighbourhood of primarily Italian and Yugoslav migrants, so while free-ranging in and out of everyone’s houses, we regularly had garlic covered morsels, deep fried sardines freshly caught from Fremantle and beautiful icing covered deep fried Slav pastries from Aunty Rita\(^\text{11}\) next door. There was a vacant

\(^{11}\) An assigned, not kin relative.
paddock at the back of our house, where two of the neighbours’ goats were usually tethered but occasionally untethered themselves and came to eat the sheets hanging on our clothesline while I was at school. Our little street was embedded in vineyards because then, the Swan Valley was the centre of wine production. My maternal grandparents lived in Midland when I was really little, then they moved to Parkerville where they owned an orchard. We visited them quite often. We, being my Mum and young sister and brother, used to take the bus into Midland, then the steam train to Parkerville, then walk the two kilometres or so to their house. Sometimes when my dad wasn’t shift working, we went in the car. Many of my maternal relatives - my mother comes from a big family - lived somewhere in Parkerville, and when we went there I could run from orchard to orchard visiting them all. I loved going to Parkerville. My grandparents lived in an old granite stone cottage.

Our house in Middle Swan was hand built by my father and grandfather. It was made of jarrah weatherboards, with asbestos sheet lining. Being the first born, I think I might have arrived in the world a little before I was planned so for much of the time we lived in that house, it was still being built. Dad and Pop built the kitchen, bathroom and the lounge room first. The toilet, modern with septic tank and laundry with copper and electric washing machine, were in the back yard. We all slept in the lounge at first, until the two bedrooms were built - one for Mum and Dad, and one for me. When my sister was born, she and I shared the bedroom. When my brother came along, Dad and Pop closed in some of the front veranda to make a sleep out for him. We lived very modestly. Mum grew most of our own vegies and Nanna grew some for us, too. We kept hens for eggs and meat. We had a Metters number two wood stove and a new electric fridge. We had a little portable metho stove with one burner, for cooking when it was too hot to light the fire. We had a wireless and much later on, after all the bedrooms were built and my brother was able to run around, we bought a record player.
I went to the local church on Sundays with Mum. When I was very little, Dad only owned a motorbike, which meant going everywhere by bus and train. Later, he sold the bike and bought a car, an FJ Holden. Dad worked away though, building the train line, so we had to take public transport everywhere. The bus was perfectly fine. It obviously came regularly enough. We had a vegetable man who used to deliver vegies once per week, a fish man, as well as daily delivery of milk, bread and of course the newspaper. Mr Marshall owned a shop half way down Bishop Road and sold lollies, the papers and almost anything else that we ran out of. I used to buy things for Mum, as well as a penny stick or ten acid drops. Mum used to go shopping in Midland sometimes, by bus, mainly for meat I think and maybe washing detergents and things, and the deliveryman delivered the shopping later that day. All the time I lived in Middle Swan, within the time of my memory, I waited by the letterbox every evening for my Pop to ride by on his pushbike, on his way home from the Midland workshops, where he worked as a mechanic. Pop knew that I would be there waiting and he often had a bag of lollies for me. I grew up with a beautiful dog, Nipper, who I looked after and exercised. When we had a car, wherever we went in the car as a family Nipper came with us. We also had other pets including galahs, which were only caged at night for their protection. I attended the Middle Swan Primary School, which I walked or caught the bus to, depending upon the weather. It was about two kilometres away. I have always wanted to be a school teacher, and I can remember regularly gathering Lisa and my friend from over the road, Pino (who couldn’t speak English very well) and making them sit still while I ‘taught’ them things.

There was something extra special about my childhood. That was our regular trip to Mandurah. Maybe one weekend a fortnight we used to travel the one hundred kilometres or so to Mandurah, where my grandparents owned a block in Morfitt Street. Dad and Pop had built a shed on it. We had a hand water pump out the front that supplied all our water, an ice box as well as a table, chairs and beds in the shed, and a toilet at the very back of the block. The night cart man emptied
the toilet bucket weekly or fortnightly. Because of the night cart, we didn’t need to use expensive soft toilet paper so the newspaper was torn into the right size pieces and hung on the back of the toilet door. I really loved going to Mandurah. Dad and Nanna loved fishing, but Dad loved beach fishing whereas Nanna loved to sit under the Mandurah Bridge, fishing for whiting. I spent lots of time fishing with Nanna and many, many hours and days fishing with Dad. Dad sometimes caught big fish and often caught ‘a feed’. But often he caught nothing, which didn’t disappoint him at all. I think that he really used to go fishing because it was peaceful and quiet and he loved to just sit at the beach. Later we sold the FJ Holden and bought a VW Beetle, which was what I remember making most of our trips to Mandurah in. I remember that the road to Mandurah was not sealed all the way - there was a big limestone stretch, still. Then not long after getting back onto the sealed part was what was known as the S bends. The S Bends were the sign to us children in the back seat that we were nearly there.

I think those trips to Mandurah were important in forming me as a person. Mandurah was stunningly natural and beautiful. It has a magnificent estuary, which was set in natural, breathtaking tuart forest. Most of the estuary was flanked in natural bush and forested wetland and many species of migratory birds from as far away as Russia and Siberia came over in season to nest. Dad loved to go fishing in most parts of Mandurah from Tim’s Thicket and Melros in the south to Golden Bay in the north. He built a little boat, which he called Colandra after my sister and me. This was a rowboat but later he bought a little motor for it. We went up the estuary in that. We sat for hours at many beautiful estuary and beach places. We would look at bird foot tracks and look in the weed that had washed in on the tide to talk about the mood of the sea. Mum wasn’t so keen on fishing but she loved to go to the beach. My sister and brother were very young in any case, and Mum would stay with them. We often went to the town beach and the lagoon as a family. In summer the lagoon was warm and surrounded by rushes, trees and bush, and birds. There were often little, hot lagoons on the sand in front of the main
lagoon. The lagoons were wonderful for my little sister and brother. We also spent lots of time on the Mandurah foreshore. Mandurah was special as a town, too. The main street kept its tuart trees for many years and the Timbertop Caravan Park had many huge tuarts. The main street of Mandurah is opposite the foreshore. We would go to the foreshore and eat fresh bread from one of the town’s two bakeries over the road. I went to swimming classes there every summer. Often, my grandparents would go to Mandurah for a week or two, perhaps when Pop had holidays, so I would go with them too. I was allowed to take time off school to go. Dad and Pop slowly built a house on the block at Morfitt Street. I loved going to Mandurah.

When I was ten, my family moved away from Middle Swan. Our nuclear family moved to Safety Bay to an already lived-in house. Safety Bay was then about half an hour’s drive from Mandurah and is on the beach. Dad had obtained a better job at the newly developing Kwinana industrial area. Pop retired, so he and Dad finished the house on the block at Mandurah. Nanna and Pop moved to Mandurah to live. Living at Safety Bay, we went fishing even more regularly. Dad and I fished everywhere there is to fish in the Safety Bay region. Dad’s favourite spot was Point Peron, which was less than a kilometre away. He also bought a bigger boat and we went out fishing around Penguin Island and further. We often went to both Penguin Island and Garden Island. Garden Island was wooded and beautiful and Penguin Island was, and still is, rugged and stunning. I attended Safety Bay Primary School followed by Kwinana High School. We did not own a television even though by then, televisions were common. I loved living in Safety Bay. I played lots of sport. One stormy night when Dad was coming home from afternoon shift and overtime, at 2am, he saw the waves breaking over the road at Palm Beach. He knew such a sight would fascinate me so he woke me up and took me to see it. It was incredible to see. I wondered if the sea would ever rise and smash down the houses along the road.
Pop and Nanna came to live with us about a year before we left. They had sold the house in Morfitt Street, Mandurah and had a granny flat built on to our house in Safety Bay. I think they were too lonely living thirty kilometres away from us when we had always been so close. They had purchased a television by then, so we could regularly watch telly! Then, happily, when I had just turned sixteen, we all moved to Mandurah to live. Pop and Nanna lived in a Granny Flat at our place. I went to Pinjarra High School. Dad was really busy with his new work at Pinjarra and we didn’t go fishing very often any more. In fact, we rarely saw Dad. He worked really long hours and when he wasn’t working, he just sat at the kitchen table reading the paper. He had bought a bigger boat by then, but it just sat in the carport. I don’t think he would have used it more than five times in total. Dad seemed really unhappy, although he said he liked his work. I think he yearned to be in nature, fishing or just ‘being’ there. A few years later, he quit work. He had been really happy all those years when we didn’t have much money, but then when we did have the money, he felt stressed and trapped. He went prospecting and loved every minute of it.

I enjoyed living in Mandurah and soon fell in love with a Mandurah boy who also loved nature and playing sport. Terry loved crabbing and we often walked in the estuary at Coodanup, Yunderup or near the estuary bridge. After our final year of high school, we moved to Perth so that I could attend Claremont Teachers College. Terry worked in Perth. We returned home most weekends. The Mandurah council was beginning to entertain proposals to develop the region into a ‘Surfer’s Paradise’ of WA, even with canals. My family and Terry’s family were already living in a new suburb, which was Dudley Park. Halls Head had also had tremendous growth, resulting from the new Pinjarra industrial development. There was little or no environmental awareness however, even though the Council President at the time was once a well-known surfer. The council did not seem to be aware that population growth did not mean that the tuarts, the riparian zones or the ‘nature’ of Mandurah had to be demolished. Perhaps they believed that progress meant
that trees and nature should not be seen. They wanted Mandurah to have the infrastructure and facilities that Perth had: undercover shopping malls, entertainment centres, dual lane highways, theatres, restaurants and huge sporting complexes. They believed that a huge population was needed to enable this development and they put schemes into place to facilitate speedy development. There was a conservation movement represented in Mandurah at the time, but with a very small voice. We prayed that Mandurah would be allowed to keep its nature.

My childhood in Middle Swan and Safety Bay, with extended visits to Mandurah, enabled the development of an insightful, perceptive and intuitive ecological sense. It was, in effect, an up bringing underpinned by deep ecology, although not recognised as such. Growing up in nature, with the endless hours spent walking and investigating beaches, waterways and riparian zones and caring for my dog and other pets, facilitated the healthy development of my ecological self. I have always felt comfortable and connected with nature, in gardens, in the bush, at the beach. Further, I have always felt strongly that nature and wild-spaces need protection from 'development' away from nature. I am grateful for the opportunity to recognise the simplicity and richness that is possible on a working class wage. Building one's own house gives a sense of achievement and pride, as well as a comfortable abode that might not otherwise be available. The experience of happiness arising with the simplicity of the shed at Mandurah, with the hand water pump, icebox and simple toilet, is valuable beyond measure in my quest for non-intrusive, sustainable ways to live with nature. Likewise, the recognition that money and status does not necessarily bring the happiness that time and simplicity can.

2.1.2 Relationships of Care ~ Ecofeminism

The strong connection with nature was a deep-seated part of my self. Before I went to teachers college, the Aboriginal land rights movement and the peace
movement had had increasing public success, with Prime Minister Gough Whitlam coming to power on a social justice, anti Vietnam War platform. When I was at teachers college, Western Australia was a place of optimism and hope for teachers. Australian schools were receiving 5 - 6% of the GDP, money was being spent on the arts and Aboriginal affairs and there was the belief that social problems and educational under-achievement would be able to be satisfactorily addressed. Health was certainly taken care of - funding difficulties for hospitals was not something that Australians considered possible. On 11 November 1975, the day of my last exam at teachers college and my twentieth birthday, the Governor General sacked Prime Minister Gough Whitlam. I came out of my exam to find students sitting on the lawn in front of Claremont Teachers College, crying. We wondered how this great saviour of schools and social justice could be sacked. We felt betrayed by our own establishment - in a liberal democracy such as our own, how could a Prime Minister be sacked? We worried about what lay ahead. The issue had been Whitlam’s spending. The opposition had blocked the supply bill, which funds government departments.

My first teaching appointment was in Kalannie, a small Western Australian wheat-belt town. Terry and I married at the end of a pleasant year in Kalannie and moved back to Perth for three years. I completed my Bachelor of Education during these years, in the late seventies, majoring in anthropology and open education, while teaching at a Perth school. The combination of anthropology and open education opened vistas and worlds that I had not known existed. I learned the intense respect for 'more than northern' ways of living that generally comes with studying anthropology, as well as the multi-perspectival views of society, rationality, materiality and truth. Further, the recognition that spiritually focused cultural ways of interacting with nature and people upheld the sacredness and respect for both people and nature, opened up a worldview that extended upon my deep respect for nature and my Christian spirituality. The open education was underpinned by Freire’s early works, critical education theory and libertarian
notions of education of the whole person. This enabled me to contextualise the anthropology into new ways of thinking about teaching and learning and a deep appreciation of the vocation I had chosen. At that stage of my life, my principles were underpinned by a deep respect for nature and a love of children, together with a deep respect for the legitimacy and belief in the intrinsic right to exist of 'more than northern' cultures.

We moved to Port Hedland, where both Terry and I first started working with Aboriginal people. I taught at South Hedland Primary School and Terry worked with the Aboriginal Affairs department. The Noonkanbah dispute raged while we were in Port Hedland. The issue was oil exploration at Noonkanbah, an Aboriginal community. One of the proposed drill sites was Pea Hill, an Aboriginal sacred site. There was huge public opposition to the mining, in support of the Aboriginal people's position. The issue culminated with the state government deploying the army to protect a convoy of drillers as it drove from Perth. The first drilling company had decided not to continue amid such strong public opposition and dropped its interest, but the government had made the issue one of power and public obedience. The government subsequently employed a drilling company to do the task, to make the point that it makes decisions, not Aboriginal people, with or without public support.

The financial cost of that exercise in applying power must have been extraordinary. We stood in the road at Port Hedland in protest, as the huge convoy passed on. All opposition was forcibly removed and the convoy successfully travelled the two thousand kilometres from Perth to Noonkanbah. It pushed on through the final vociferous protest and made its point of drilling on sacred land at Pea Hill. As expected the whole exercise yielded no oil, but desecrated the land. For me, the exercise was an experiential awakening to the shocking occurrence of government-sanctioned injustice. I remember realising, with sadness and distress, that we should not trust the government to be fair or reasonable. I concluded that power begets the lust for power. What on earth
could have prompted our decision-makers to behave in such a way? I wondered if
the behaviour was motivated by panic that oil might be running out in the world
and Australia needed to do everything in its power to obtain our own supply.
Alternatively, perhaps the government actions were motivated by prejudice and
fear that Aboriginal people might be beginning to develop the capacity for self-
determination.

I spent a beautiful year teaching year seven Aboriginal children in Port Hedland.
The children and I went fishing with the children's parents, visited interesting
sites, went shopping to do our maths and did many other practical things, all the
time photographing and writing about the activities and producing books of
stories. I became very aware of Aboriginal culture and developed a deeper regard
for the relationship between people and nature. In 1980 we moved to Derby to
live. I taught year one Aboriginal children. After school, which finished in the
early afternoon, I worked with the grandparents at Mowanjum community,
teaching reading. A beautiful relationship developed and the grandparents came
into the school to tell stories to the children. The education was successful, but in
that year I learned much more about culture, nature and people than I had ever
learned in my life. I learned about tolerance of difference, love of this country
and caring for people through disadvantage of any description.

I was deeply impressed by the way Aboriginal people care for people who are
mentally or physically disabled. Everybody shares the care and actually 'cares'.
Until then, I had only seen disabled people cared for in special institutions,
because no one was obliged or expected to stay home from work to care for them.
I really began to question the practice of institutionalising care. In Aboriginal
communities it is simply normal practice that if someone has a problem, someone
else will be available to care and help as required. I became conscious that caring
for relatives, friends and associates in need seems to be a normal quality of being
human. Why would anyone want to stay in an institution when they become old or
incapacitated? Likewise if anyone has any disadvantage at all, such as inability to
read, someone else will be available to help. Separateness from each other, or
atomisation, is not known in Aboriginal communities - people are quite
interdependent. Lack of skill or lack of capacity is certainly not a reason for worry
or stigmatisation, because people actually care for each other. So, if some are sick
with alcohol abuse, others will understand and help them to cope with their lives. I
travelled with Daisy Utomorrah and others across country, in a plane actually, and
saw how she loved the country. It was like a connection to her. It helped me to
realise how much I love the country too, but differently to her. I love it because
it is beautiful and natural, she loved it because of those reasons, but more
particularly, because it is connected to her by family association, responsibility
and obligation and a lifetime of memories of care for country and people. She
explained the pain of separation during the mission times, when she was forcibly
taken to Kunmunya Mission before old Mowanjum. She also described the anxiety
of separation from the land with which she and her people are deeply attached,
which continues unabated. With Aboriginal people in Mowanjum, I learned to do
things one at a time, to engage fully in the practice of my activity - to be awake to
what I was doing, without making unquestioned assumptions. More particularly, I
learned much about relationships of care.

In 1981 we moved to Alice Springs, where I worked with Aboriginal people in the
southern third of the Northern Territory. I worked as an education officer,
travelling to schools in Pintubi and Pitjantjatjara communities. I visited most
schools south of Tenant Creek within the Northern Territory. I learned to speak
some Pitjantjatjara. I learned to listen fully, to hear about country through the
perspective of a non-English language, to really engage with another culture. At
the same time, I felt the ability to merge with country too. I came to feel
connected to the Petermann Ranges, the red soil, the craggy remnant hills and
rocky gullies. The distance and space felt deeply beautiful. By this time, I had
heard far too many stories about Aboriginal - non Aboriginal contact as part of
the history of this country, and as people’s ongoing life experience, to trust or
even believe governments ever again. I witnessed deep social injustice, intense poverty in conditions most Australians would not endure; however Pintubi and Pitjantjatjara people have deep, unseverable connections and responsibilities to country. Never leave country. The paradox was that as a young non-Aboriginal woman, it would have been quite comprehensible if Aboriginal people had discriminated against me because of my visible connectedness to people who had harmed Aboriginal people. I worked for the government and represented the government yet I did not ever, in all the years of working with Aboriginal people, experience any prejudice of any description. Perhaps it was clear to people that I liked to listen and learn, that I was genuine in my intention to develop educational courses as communities required them, and that I cared.

I always spent time developing good relationships with individuals and communities. I witnessed petrol sniffing, particularly young men, some stunted and distended from sniffing since the age of seven or eight, pushing cars or sitting around with empty baked bean cans full of petrol slung around heads, hooked over ears, helping to soften daily life. Alcohol and other substance abuses and the resulting domestic violence were very visible. The paradoxes of horrific addiction, but attachment to country and strong culture and tradition, amid poverty, alienation, violence, oppression and prejudice, were evident. These paradoxes existed in a context of deep respect and care for other people, especially the disadvantaged, especially the self-inflicted disadvantaged. I learned to always help others and fully engage in the task at hand, and to be aware of the present moment and connect it to the past, for the ancestors and for the next generations. I began to see Aboriginal people’s actions in maintaining culture and connection to land, together with the alcohol abuse and general disregard for northern notions of property and materials, as forms of resistance to oppression and domination. Non-violent, non-cooperation seemed to characterise and justify Aboriginal non-participation in government sponsored and initiated activities such as employment schemes and settlement building programs. I felt deeply relieved to be able to understand the
strength and cultural empowerment that comes from forms of resistance. While based in Alice Springs, I maintained contact with environment and peace groups. I participated in the Alice Springs chapter of the Save the Franklin Dam campaign. I also participated in the protests of the time against the USA Base at Pine Gap. Any subservience to a globalising agenda that was likely to result in Australia being a nuclear target seemed absolutely unreasonable.

In Alice Springs, there were a number of culturally informed voluntary groups of women, who supported Aboriginal people in general and Aboriginal women in particular. They were inspired by ecofeminist agendas of culturally appropriate technological development, a linking of violence with patriarchal domination which was characteristic of colonisation and government decision-making in the present and in the past and deep relationships of care for people. The groups had relationships and connections with most of the Aboriginal communities in the region. I moved in these circles and was inspired by working with other like-minded non-Aboriginal people who worked to develop relationships of care with Aboriginal people. The theme of interpersonal care that I had recognised through my work with Aboriginal people, the deep cultural appreciation and the anti-racist way of working, was cemented through many discussions around the theory of ecofeminism (labelled only as feminism, at that stage, rather than ecofeminism). The development of my practical knowledge of radical ecology (but not yet labelled as such) was beginning through the combination of ecofeminist theory and action with my life experience of deep ecological practice.

2.1.3 Participation as Power-With ~ Ecological Democracy

We moved to Darwin after Alice Springs and I worked as an education officer with Aboriginal people in the East Arnhem area. This time, I needed to learn to speak some Yolngumatha. East Arnhem Aboriginal people are intensely proud of their Aboriginality and have a different, less violent experience of colonisation to other Aboriginal people. There were deep relationships of care and trust,
sometimes lasting several generations, between Yolngu people and Christian missionaries. When working in Galiwinku, everyone must speak Djamborrpangu, a Yolngu language, because that is the main language spoken. Yolngu children learn their mother's language first, followed by their father's language, followed by lingua-francas such as Gupupingu. Children learn English after they have learned their Yolngu languages. After six months in the Northern Territory, I was very fortunate to be offered work at Batchelor College, an Aboriginal tertiary education institution. I worked as a teacher educator with the Remote Area Teacher Education program. The task for teacher educators was to facilitate Aboriginal people to learn to teach Aboriginal children in Aboriginal ways. I loved this work. I kept working with East Arnhem communities, teaching some classes at Batchelor College and some intensive courses in East Arnhem communities. I was very fortunate that at this stage, Deakin University educators became involved with Batchelor College. Stephen Kemmis and John Henry regularly visited staff and students and instigated a number of action research projects. I began to research curriculum negotiation, using a process of action research, with my students. The practice became part of my habit as a teacher and as a learner and helped me develop processes to become a reflective practitioner. I have kept this practice going since then.

By this stage of my life, which was my late twenties, I had learned to question every habit and every thought I had ever had! I had learned that there are multiple understandings of similar experiences and many different perspectives on culture. I had not outrightly rejected my culture of origin, but learned that there are great weaknesses with business-as-usual as a modus operandi for determining rationality, or economy as a modus operandi for determining society. How should we relate to each other? How do we decide? What is knowledge? Moving in and out of business-as-usual but spending more time with Aboriginal people, I came to view my own culture of origin from the perspective of an outsider, which I now recognise to be a very helpful trait in the quest to create a transformed society.
(I even came to view non-Aboriginal bodies with some comedy. I remember visiting a shopping mall in Mandurah after three years in the Northern Territory and being shocked by the paleness of South-West Australians! Also, their standard of clothing and formality seemed quite absurd! I immediately recognised this as coming from a different ethnocentrism, viewing business-as-usual as rather comical ‘other’, so changed my sentiment in order to be able to appreciate all people and their activities!)

I grew to love the Northern Territory with a deep felt connectedness. Terry and I travelled to Kakadu when we were not travelling with work. We came to love that country, together with its Aboriginal history. I was a member of, and participated in the Darwin Peace and Environment Group activities. We were actively opposed to the mining of yellow cake\textsuperscript{12} from Jabiru, because of opposition to the nuclear industry as well as the highly likely damage to the stunning Kakadu national park. In December 1984, a pesticide gas leak at Union Carbide’s Bhopal plant shocked and horrified the world. More than eight thousand people were killed, and hundreds of thousands maimed and injured. This, in the name of ‘business-as-usual’. Any remnants of approval or respect that I might have had for ‘business-as-usual’ evaporated.

During 1985, we sat vigil with other peace group members at Darwin Harbour while the first, and subsequent monthly convoys of yellow cake were transported to the harbour. Like the experience some years before at Port Hedland with Noonkanbah, the convoy was an exercise in armed intimidation against any civilian protestor. These convoys felt like violent exercises of government and corporate power. Sitting quietly at the Darwin port, in our chairs, six of us, from 3AM onwards, we waited to watch the convoy arrive. We did not dream that it would be as it was. The lights from the convoy became visible about fifteen kilometres away, probably not long after it passed the Palmerston turn off. We could see the lights brightening in intensity as it neared us. It was very frightening and I remember
when it slowly and finally came into view, just before daybreak, I could not stop myself from sobbing. It was horrific. What did they expect was going to confront them? We were only six people! They drove in, someone unlocked the fence to the port area, and they went through, parked, locked the convoy in, and went away. That was it. Blazing lights, six or eight police cars in escort, the point was made that this decision was going ahead - whether activists agree or not. (During the second or third monthly vigil of the yellow cake convoy, Greenpeace activists from Sydney arrived to support our group and during the same visit, a docker left the harbour gates unlocked. When the convoy transporters left, the entire group busied itself painting slogans all over the containers and some of the group chained themselves to the ship and the containers, which gained considerable media attention, and enabled the group to make some powerful points to the public.)

I left Batchelor College and after a year of being the manager of the Aboriginal Education section of the Commonwealth Education Department in Darwin, at the age of thirty, we left to move to Stratham, in the tuart forest of South-West Western Australia. The yearning to return to the tuarts never really went away, but I had learned to love the country differently. I had learned to question my culture and tradition, but respect the depth of humanity. I had learned the power of experience and practical knowing, and the depth of my yearning for social justice, freedom and participation in the determination of one’s own being. I had learned very clearly that those with power can be irrational and untrustworthy, and would use any degree of intimidation or force necessary to achieve their task. I had learned to ask questions and to be patient and persistent but never give up on bringing about change. I had also learned a very deliberate way to enhance my practical knowledge, which was reflective practice. Our first child Liam was on the way, and was born shortly after we arrived in Stratham in 1986.

12 Uranium ore.
We had returned to care for nature, our baby and ourselves, and to work towards social and ecological change. The experience of parenthood was one of deep reconnecting, in several ways. It was a deep connectedness to the baby, for whom I felt resilient and determined enough to do anything. I recommitted myself to my goal of making the world a better place, for my baby. I felt a much deeper connection to the future because I recognised his right to be able to self-actualise, as his conatus would take him. Likewise, his children deserved a future of environmental health. At the same time, I felt a different connection to my own parents. It dawned on me, slowly at first, that they love me just as much as I love my babe! By the same process of 'seeing' networks of reconnections, it dawned on me that other parents loved their children, or had the potential to love their children, just as much as I loved mine. Through the capacity of parents to love their children as I love mine, I felt a deep connection to all parents in the world, and likewise, to all children of parents in the world. I felt a deep empathy for those parents who could not parent effectively because of circumstances induced by others, such as corporations to whom they may have been indebted or bonded. Breastfeeding and of course, the deep connection one feels through physical love, enabled me to see a connection to all my ancestors, and to all of everyone's ancestors, maybe for the duration of humanity. So, from then on, the conscious, almost physical awareness of connectedness informed many of my ideas and much of my practice. The connectedness of parenthood is, for me, accompanied by a total emotional engagement. It has stirred and engaged a deep capacity to care and 'care for' people and nature, for the future of the planet. It is certainly not purely rational, and is more than rational and sensory together. For me, parenting was the catalyst for the engagement of the religious and the mystical. I had always 'known' connectedness of course, particularly the sensory-physical and rational-logical, but the parenting of a baby enabled me to 'know' and 'feel' connectedness in a different, spiritual or numinous way. The continuing awareness of connectedness is for me, the awareness of transcendent unity and oneness, which is the deep knowing that everything is profoundly interconnected.
On reflection, there are many paths to this profound experience of interbeing, including intentional development of it through religious practices such as meditation and prayer. For me, parenthood provided the short cut!

We chose to live counter to the dominant culture and to live intentionally. Three months after Liam was born the nuclear power plant at Chernobyl in the Ukraine exploded. The full scale of the disaster was played down. My distrust of business-as-usual compounded but now combined anger with a new, real dread of the potential of the government-corporate liaison. Having no aspirations towards the business-as-usual inspired goals of financial well-being or ladder climbing, we had no particular plans for employment at that point.

I became involved with Noongar people who were intent on restoring Noongar language to the status of a spoken language again. Terry went to our local university to do an education degree. We started growing and preparing much of our own food in our organic garden. I did lots of volunteer work with Noongars, helping to record, learn and teach Noongar language, and recognising tradition where other non-Noongars had declared that Noongar language and culture was a thing of the past. I recognised the deep Noongar connection to land and to Noongar culture and tradition. I became intensively involved and our group successfully obtained funding to start a Noongar Language and Culture centre, which I participated in as a teacher/researcher for three years. I learned to speak Noongar, giving me an extra depth of respect and love for our bioregion.

At the same time, I became involved as the media spokesperson in a group that for over six months, attempted to stop a sand-mining company from mining a local beach from the fore-dunes to the high water mark. The section of the beach to be mined, Minninup Beach in Geographe Bay, was quite pristine. First-hand experience of government supported mining company lies and public relations against our local group, which involved name calling and collaboration with the media to discredit group members and concoct apparent community division, was
another eye-opener to the forces involved in 'progress' towards environmental
deterioration. Our group and subsequently, the beach was 'mowed down' by a
sophisticated and effective public relations machine comprising highly paid public
relations staff and politicians (who were subsequently discredited through the
revelations of 'W.A. Inc.').

In 1989 the Exxon-Valdez ran aground in Alaska, spilling millions of gallons of
crude oil on pristine beaches and taking years to clean up to the status of 'as
clean as possible'. Bhopal, known as 'the Hiroshima of the Chemical Industry',
Chernobyl, the Exxon-Valdez disaster - each new disaster seemed to break new
records for the most horrific. In 1990-1991 during the Gulf War, apart from the
loss of many thousands of Iraqis, hundreds of oil wells were set on fire by
withdrawing Iraqis. The smoke and atmospheric pollution was intense and visible
throughout the world. My soul ached vehemently.

At the conclusion of phase one of the Noongar language research and after
travelling the world for nearly a year, I returned to work at the local university
when Liam and Ben were six and five years old respectively. I worked in the area
of Noongar education. I also completed a Masters thesis on Noongar education in
the local area, ethnographically documenting the Noongar culture of the children’s
lives and their school context. As well as culture I documented the sense of
supportive community that Noongars have and finally, I practically recognised the
ecological democracy view of the domination of nature and people in the interests
of the economy or the bureaucracy. Recalling my practical experiences of
Noonkanbah, the oppression of Aboriginal people, the Frankland Dam, Pine Gap, the
yellow-cake vigils and the Minninup Beach anti-mining campaign together with my
theoretical knowledge of Bhopal, Chernobyl, the Exxon-Valdez and the Gulf War, I
recognised domination as a hierarchical obsession. Domination, oppression and
exploitation are manifestations of 'power-over' whether it be domination of
nature by people, domination of activists by governments or companies, domination
of Aboriginal people by governments, pastoralists and public servants, or domination of non-conforming children by well-meaning teachers.

Authentic, genuine local participation in decision-making has the potential to balance these injustices. My Masters thesis produced a series of recommendations to school people which focused on the incorporation of Aboriginality into the school and classroom. It recommended that where Aboriginal children attended a school, particularly one where Aboriginal children are in the minority, such as in schools in south west Western Australia, that the teachers incorporate genuine Aboriginal participation in school decision-making. In particular it recommended Aboriginal parental participation in classrooms, as well as student-focused pedagogies that incorporate Aboriginality into classroom management and all classroom activities. Although the thesis was reportedly used to strengthen the case for a local Aboriginal school and tutorial support for Noongar high school students, realistically the thesis would probably have been used to prop open the windows of the local Education Department offices. By and large teachers are not able, or in the position to implement these recommendations. How do we suddenly work in a power-with way within the constraints of a normal high school timetable and structure, when we have always worked in a power-over way? With its multitude of built-in restrictions and controls, the system simply does not facilitate teachers to work in ways conducive to the support of Aboriginality. The Aboriginal education problem with its terrible statistics, does not reside with Aboriginal people. The problem is a non-Aboriginal one. Society needs to make fundamental changes in order to stop the oppression of people and our environment. Through practical knowledge of radical ecology, which comprises ecological democracy, ecofeminism and deep ecology, I realised that oppression, domination and exploitation of people and nature are 'naturalised' in business-as-usual society. It is part of our everyday experience - common sense. It is deeply ingrained into the hegemony of business-as-usual. In short this means
that if something or someone is blocking our goal, we simply bowl it/them over - usually without a second glance.

We often go to Mandurah to visit Terry’s family who still live there. Sometimes I feel the intense pain of frustration, loss and grief. Mandurah now has many square kilometres of canals just like Surfer’s Paradise, as well as shopping malls, entertainment centres, theatres, restaurants and dual-lane highways. The tuarts are largely long gone, the riparian zones have been largely denuded, and the Creery Wetlands and many of the places where the migrating birds from Russia and Siberia nested have been flattened under housing estates. There are increasingly dangerous levels of acidity in the Peel estuarine system resulting from the acidic sulphate soils which are a consequence of the canal developments.

The abuse of power for its own sake and for money is ugly. I feel the need to scream and cry but instead, I type it into this computer to write this dissertation. Maybe my contribution will help. My life-long interest is sustainability - nurturing and sustaining ourselves, each other and nature which are of course, sustaining the sources of our sustenance. I loved to read Aidan Davison’s 2001 book. I loved to read his optimism about living in the margins, to live intentionally and meaningfully in the present moment. I am optimistic about our future but I struggle to remain this way. Because of our boys we have a direct connection to the future. Like other parents we wish for our children to firstly have a future and secondly, that the future is sustaining and caring for them and their children, so that they can actualise their dreams and ambitions, as we did. For me, to be a sustaining culture means that there must be ecological, social and cultural sustainability. I did not specify economic sustainability because I wrote social sustainability and I see that economy should be a sub-system of society. Society should not be determined by the economy.

I wanted to start the dissertation with a personal introduction because research is always subjective regardless of the paradigm in which it is written, and it takes a perspective
according to the writer's experience of life. My own perspective is a mother/school teacher’s search for ways of sustaining the sources of our sustenance. In summary my motivation for transformation was explained by my practical knowledge of the oppression of Aboriginal people, social activists, workers and local residents together with the environment, by governments in association with corporations. I have illustrated the forces of business-as-usual through the power-over manoeuvres of the government-backed convoy to Noonkanbah; the Frankland Dam; the USA Base at Pine Gap; the continuing oppression of Aboriginal people; the yellow-cake convoy to Darwin, the mining of Minninup Beach and the acidification of the Peel Estuary, and linked these to the disasters of Bhopal, Chernobyl, Exxon-Valdez and the Gulf War. I organised the account around themes of deep ecology, ecofeminism and ecological democracy, which have directly impacted upon my life and practical knowledge. This material shows that the following beliefs inform my thinking about sustainability, on the basis of my reflective experience:

- A practical experience of nature as a child can help to bond with place, developing a strong ongoing connection.
- Money and economic development are often accompanied by ecological ruin and social devastation, such as the Mandurah riparian zones and tuart forests as well as the Bhopal disaster.
- Governance in Australia is often power-over and often accompanied by techniques of violence, for example the desecration of Pea Hill at Noonkanbah.
- People are capable of deep care for selves and others, even in deeply socially devastated circumstances, such as when colonised people are confined to holdings of land by virtue of history and an oppressive welfare system. Likewise, non-violent non-cooperation can assist with cultural strength and social resilience, such as that of the Pitjantjatjara people in desert country resisting outside-imposed employment and housing programs.
- There is a deep connectedness between people and people as well as people and nature, to which one can become physically as well as emotionally and logically aware, during deep emotionally connective events such as those of parenting.
- Some people in this country, for example myself, my family and many of my friends; want a sustainable future more than money.

These insights explain my propensity towards radical ecology, the emancipative paradigm and the quest for transformation towards sustainability.
2.2 Applied Radical Ecology

The first part of this section briefly introduces radical ecology and is a commentary on the dialogical processes of the radical ecology project\textsuperscript{13}, while the second illustrates radical ecology and its implications for education. There are different terminologies for the meaning I assign to the term radical ecology. These are 'green theory' (for example Val Plumwood, 1994, 64), 'ecopolitical theory' (as used by Robyn Eckersley and Peter Hay, 1992) or 'ecophilosophy' (as used by Warwick Fox, 1995, 8). I use the term 'radical ecology' because the title is inclusive of ecology and radical theory. Pezzoli (1996) writes that the current 'environmentalism' is at least a century old, citing 1880s environmental writers including Jane Adams, Florence Kelly and Alice Hamilton. Aldo Leopold’s (1949) \textit{A Sand County Almanac} and Rachel Carson’s (1962) \textit{Silent Spring} are widely acknowledged as being seminal works for the development of environmentalism. Zimmerman (1993, v) writes that in the late 1960s, members of the young counter-cultural movement began calling for radical transformation of western society to save humanity and the planet from the disastrous ecological consequences of “endless material progress”. The various positions in the movement became the roots of the various strands of ecophilosophy and radical ecology. The gists of the positions illustrate the different radical approaches to the problem of unsustainable development.

2.2.1 Radical Ecology: A Union of Positions

Ecological democracy\textsuperscript{14} comprises a policy/political cluster of views which have contributed towards a community-oriented, ecological praxis of democracy. Morrison (1995) uses the term 'ecological democracy', stating that its logic is "the logic of connection, of inclusion" (1995, 230). The essence of ecological democracy is the development of ecologically oriented human communities which are underpinned by participatory democracy. Ecological democracy perspectives are utilised extensively in interpreting the research on the two schools in this research.

Ecofeminism comprises a feminist cluster of views which have contributed towards a redefinition of peace and non-violence. Ecofeminism analyses hierarchical, power-over

\textsuperscript{13} The radical ecology project is the project of refining radical ecology, so that it can serve as a multi-dimensional meta-theory to guide human practices in the fields of society and environment, that is, to guide human endeavour.
relationships and its imperative is relationships of care between people as well as between people and nature. Ecofeminist perspectives are of particular importance to chapter seven of this research, which investigates the transformation of hierarchical relationships to those of cooperation. According to Warren (1995, 194) the term 'eco-feminism' most frequently refers to the grassroots political activist groups which are women-initiated and local or indigenous. The groups aim to raise awareness of and resolve environmental problems that affect women directly and disproportionately such as contaminated water, toxic household products, uncontrolled hazardous waste sites and deforestation.

Deep ecology broadly comprises an ecopsychological/cosmological cluster of views which have contributed towards a re-envisioning of the relationship between humans and non-human nature. Devall (1990, 11) sees deep ecology as "finding our bearings, to the process of grounding ourselves through fuller experience of our connections to earth". Deep ecologist Freya Mathews (1994a) teaches that human meaningfulness arises from the spiritual capacity to maintain the ecocosm, the crucial contribution being the attitude itself. Deep ecology perspectives are utilised extensively in chapter eight of this research, in considering the development of the ecological self.

Being informed by the participative values of radical ecology, I understand radical ecology as a union rather than the intersection of the positions, enabling the multiplicity of voices to be respected and upheld. I show this by using a cooperative rather than an argumentative rationality (Lather, 1992, 95), which is grounded in a refutation of positivism. It is important to see that each position enables the incorporation of the insights of the other radical ecology positions. Each position simply amplifies its own area of interest.

"Intellectual kinship" - involving similarity in the manner in which facts are assessed, comprehended and valued … I am referring to this mysterious sensation which begins to "reside" within us, when, immediately upon meeting someone, it seems as though we have somehow always been tied to them by an enduring friendship. …Unfortunately, as a group-, we academics and politicians alike expend much of our energy on unjustifiable "fights" among ourselves, provoked by adjectival or, even worse, by purely adverbial differences. While we wear ourselves thin in petty "harangues", in which personal vanities are

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The terms ‘ecoonarchy’, ‘social ecology’ and ‘ecological democracy’ are sometimes used interchangeably, although they have different histories. I use the term ‘ecological democracy’ because it clearly conveys the essence of the position.
displayed and egos are scratched and bruised, we weaken ourselves for the real battle: the struggle against our antagonists. (Freire, 1995, ix - xi)

Freire describes his notion of intellectual kinship as that bond between people who would otherwise be strangers in that there is no genetic relationship. I see it as a bond of mutual understanding. Freire says that it is felt by both parties, "as a sort of deja-vu" (1995, ix). He points out that when faced with the same problem it is insignificant that these kin may have assumed different positions. Importantly, he points out that belonging to the same "intellectual family" does not imply the reduction of one into the other, because an authentic kinship is founded upon the autonomy of each.

Whilst underpinned by the autonomy of each position, Freire describes the following qualities as aspirations in the seeking of durability:

A love for autonomy, the struggle to sustain it, the search for creativity, the defense of the idea that friendship is to be cherished; the maintenance of intellectual responsibility and rigorousness in discussing any subject; the search for clarity; the courage to expose oneself; the relishing of risk-taking; a kind of purity without puritanism; a humility without servitude… (Freire, 1995, ix)

Radical ecologists are part of an ‘intellectual family’ with a variety of autonomous positions taken in relation to particular problems. The arguments between academics representing the various positions have weakened the 'intellectual family' of radical ecology, which has delayed the project of eco-social transformation. I propose that if the qualities of autonomy put forward by Freire underpinned the work of the ‘intellectual family’ of radical ecology, a greater collaboration and clarity of purpose would follow across the positions. Having said this, I acknowledge the dangerous possibility of veiling significant differences under the falsehood of a shared agreement, values and vision as warned by Wals and Jickling (2002, 223) and Robottom (1993, 133). These falsehoods can result in contradictory notions all being uncritically accepted, ultimately supporting the interests of the dominant paradigm. Stronach and MacLure (1997, 5) choose not to choose between binary oppositions as a deliberate practise of strategic uncertainty, aiming to mobilise rather than fix meaning. They make a case for these practises of uncertainty on political and methodological grounds because there are no simple truths – any suggestion that there are, is falling into the trap described by Wals and Jickling. This is not a postmodern abyss of uncertainty, it is acknowledgement that
there are multiple possibilities of courses of action, depending upon perspective, need, context, location and purpose.

The word: 'discussion' has multiple uses, referring to a range of communicative actions from cooperative, peaceful communions to arguments characterised by forms of violence. Arguments\textsuperscript{15} are often extremely counter productive to the resolution of a problem. The refining of the project of radical ecology has been prolonged and painful, seemingly because of individuals' determined attachment to their views, refusal to see any merit in another view and strong desire to 'win' for their position. Rifkin (1985, 83) identifies controlling knowledge and empathetic knowledge. He identifies ‘controlling knowledge’ as coming from positivistic efforts to objectively determine the manifestation of things so that they can be used, exploited, harnessed and controlled. On the other hand ‘empathetic knowledge’ is concerned with connecting, relating and participation rather than control. These two approaches to inquiry result in very different processes and very different kinds of knowledges as outcomes. The empathetic approach is compatible with radical ecology on the basis of its cooperative, caring approach whereas the controlling knowledge is the antithesis. Debate which is underpinned by adversity arises from controlling knowledge. To construct a more egalitarian social order, I choose not to condone the power dynamics which ecophilosophy eschews that are grounded in coercive, controlling values (Lather, 1992, 92; Rifkin, 1985, 83). I wish to challenge the use of hierarchical, reductionist discursive strategies that intend to attack and eliminate. Rather, my intention is to preserve the multiple voices of radical ecology in order to utilise their essential wisdom for use with the particular as required.

\subsection*{2.2.2 The Radical Ecology Debates}

Radical ecology has developed since the 1970s through extended and often painful debates. Merchant (1992, 153) defends the radical debates as important because they "push each other to rethink and re-evaluate their own proposals for change." Sessions (1991, 91) indicates that as a result of the debates, thinkers on either side of the debate understand their own views better together with those of their opponents and they have deepened their own and the general understanding of the planetary crisis we face.

\footnote{\textsuperscript{15}I refer to ‘argument’ in the sense where the process is disputatious and adversarial (Delbridge \textit{et al.}, 1982).}
Argumentative support or proof to generate criticisms is a characteristic of philosophical discourse (Warren, 1994a, 4). My view however, is that there is a point where argument is violence, where it loses the point of its explication and aims only for an 'I win/you lose' outcome.

Radical ecologists have used processes which they eschew. In their effort to transform the world, radical ecologists have bullied, put-down, not listened, deliberately misinterpreted, been intolerant of difference, blamed and angrily attempted to control others in the field of radical ecology in order to 'win' - to climb the ladder to success. When radical ecologists use the controlling knowledges of the metaphorical business-as-usual ladder they are not using radical ecology. As a result, for quite some time the radical ecology debate resulted in a sharply demarcated division of radical ecologists into their respective 'safe camps' with strong positional identities arising from a sense of competition rather than cooperation, relatedness and inclusion which (theoretically) characterises the field.

**Rifkin's Controlling Knowledge: Examples**

Levine (1991, 1) referred to a "volatile political debate" between advocates of social ecology and those of deep ecology. Levine says that the debate used confrontational rhetoric and name-calling. Similarly exchanges in the deep ecology - ecofeminist debate have been impassioned, vehement and bitter and in the words of Sessions, "rather rancorous" (1991, 91). Levine says:

> Some deep ecologists have accused ecofeminism of shallowness, anthropocentrism, short sightedness, and environmental naiveté, while various ecofeminists have classed their accusers as sexist, shallow, ahistorical, stoical, and even fascist. (1991, 1)

Others, for example Mathews (1994b) pointed out that, "the battlelines of this debate are emphatically gendered" (my emphasis). Her language illustrates war as well as gender division. There is evidence to support Sessions’ and Merchant's view that as a result of the debate, thinkers re-evaluate and rethink their own positions. Positions have been clarified, and improved social and political theories have been provided where these were lacking. This is evident in the work of the ecofeminist philosophers since 1990, particularly Plumwood and Warren. However in my opinion, in addition to contributing to a mutual understanding between (and within) the different positions and
generally advancing the project of radical ecology, the competitive win-lose character of some of the arguments has also been responsible for the retention of the polarisation of the various positions of radical ecology. In assuming an aggressive, combatant, adversarial character, some protagonists have refused to accept that there may be legitimacy in other positions. (I would particularly include Salleh, 1984 and 1989 and W. Fox, 1989 here). In adversarial circumstances, the debate uses a notion of power as power-over rather than power-with.

Warren explains the lack of progress towards Plumwood's (1994, 64 - 87) calls for inclusion of sensitivity to multiple forms of oppression in any liberatory ecopolitics as:

The participants in the ecopolitics debate have been unnecessarily dismissive of each other; the internal debate has suppressed "the potential for a fully political understanding of the human domination of nature, and understanding of the sort an ecological feminism can provide" (p. 66); and it has been conducted in "the spirit of competitive reductionism" and false choice... (Warren 1994a, 5)

This sentiment is exemplified in the following comment by W. Fox, who is discussing a critique of deep ecology by social ecologist Bookchin.:

Bookchin's attempt to give the word ecology a specific, normative sense illustrates a common tactic that is employed in ideological battles over significant concepts: winning the semantic battle puts you well on the way to winning your particular war - and not just at a theoretical level (1995, 31).

In this kind of communication the intent from the outset is to win a war, to gallantly defend a particular position on the basis of magnifying a weakness in the other's armour and seeking to destroy.

Warren (1994b, 179-185) illustrates how patriarchy operates as a dysfunctional system based on a system of up-down power-over relationships. Habermas (1987) explains that language functions to maintain systemic entrenched beliefs and values in an insidious, unnoticed manner with the effect that collusion with the system occurs unintentionally. As our northern culture is patriarchal (this is a feminist tenet) our language functions to perpetuate patriarchy. Using a discourse analysis approach Warren explicates the existence of domination metaphors and sexist language in philosophy. She illustrates:

Good reasoners knock down arguments; they tear, rip, chew, cut them up, attack them, try to beat, destroy, or annihilate them, preferably by "nailing them to the wall" [citing Vance Cope-Kasten, 1989]. ... Good arguers are sharp, incisive, cutting, relentless, intimidating, brutal. ...
Good arguments have a thrust to them; they are compelling, binding, airtight, steel-trap, knock-down, dynamite, smashing, and devastating bits of reasoning which lay things out and pin them down, overcoming any resistance. (1994b, 190)

In this case radical ecologists who use these tactics are unintentionally lending support to pervasive patriarchal practices, effectively validating the 'isms of domination' therein.

**Rifkin’s Empathetic Knowledge: Examples**

An example showing application of Rifkin's empathetic knowledge is deep ecologist David Abram's (1996) thesis on invoking our sensitivities to enhance perception of the ecosphere. Rather than the adversity arising from debate, his thesis allows us to see significant common ground between the deep ecology and ecofeminist categories as well as within the myriad ecofeminist positions. His thesis is one of radical interconnection so that the perceiver and the perceived are interdependent, a view taken by Sheldrake (1996, 65 - 89), Heron (1996, 116) and new scientists such as Capra (1997, 247). This is also the Buddhist notion of interbeing (Nhat Hanh, 1995, 10 - 11).

In reconciling the whole, the boundaries of deep ecology can be widened by acknowledging the perceived together with the perceiver and finding a place for the sensory body within deep ecology, a position which has heretofore been primarily a 'psychological/spiritual' position. This has the effect of blurring one section of the boundary between deep ecology and ecofeminism because ecofeminism is also concerned with the body, and particularly the logic of domination which locates the body within the objectified sphere of nature (see Plumwood, 1993). It also makes common the subject of relationality\(^\text{16}\) since the connection between the perceiver and the perceived signifies relation. Also in this case the ecocentrism-anthropocentrism adversity has no foundation when the perceiver is seen as connected to the perceived. The body is interconnected with the ecosphere while the ecosphere is interconnected with the anthroposphere.

A treatise such as Abram’s, constructed through the process of empathetic knowledge, reveals considerable common ground across and between the positions that oppositional approaches do not. Abram’s thesis also stands particularly strong against criticism

\(^{16}\)Relationality is an ecofeminist tenet (see Sheila Mason-Mullet, 1992, Plumwood, 1993, 185)
underpinned by controlling approaches such as that by Holden (2001, 37 – 56) where even the title, “Phenomenology versus pragmatism”, depicts competition. Although Holden recognised the beauty in Abram’s work and took opportunities to highlight insights, her critique was informed by an unquestioned presumption of a win/lose, up/down hierarchical academic approach to the critique. Using sarcasm at certain points, she revealed a hierarchical set of beliefs about the world as well, such as the following:

Abram should perhaps be forgiven his failure to consider the massively more complex and all-encompassing institutions through which modern culture now operates (but imagine any number of reactions of the 500 or so most powerful billionaires in the world receiving a memo that their technocratic models of language and action have been classified as outmoded and that people have decided they prefer to experience the world directly rather than consume what they have not experienced creating). (2001, 55)

Other than to ridicule Abram it is difficult to fathom what Holden had attempted to achieve with this passage since from my reading of Abram's work, to consider modern cultural institutions was not Abram's purpose in writing. I imagine that the five hundred most powerful billionaires will be informed by their balance sheets and financial advisers rather than Holden's memo but how does this help us in the effort to bring about a reform environmental ethic, which I understand to be Holden's objective? Her attack is also quite personal, for example:

Does Abram hope his readers will abandon their technology-intensive ways, remove their shoes to feel the earth between their toes and start walking toward the forest interior, learning to chirp like the birds, while Abram himself remains a university ecologist, a philosopher, and a writer? (2001, 55)

Having now deeply considered empathetic, relational approaches to writing and discussion for quite a number of years, I actually find works that are intentionally adversarial, aiming for a win/lose outcome, to be predictable, unpleasant and frustrating to read. Why not write about phenomenology in relation to pragmatism for example, rather than ‘against’ pragmatism? Perhaps an article on what Holden as a pragmatist, had learned to improve her own reform agenda, or maybe taking up Abram's "failure to consider the … all-encompassing institutions" she referred to would have led to greater advances towards sustainability than the tiny amount of ground we have gained from her article.
Heidegger writes, "Any kind of polemics fails from the outset to assume the attitude of thinking" (in Hallen, 1995b, 199). It has been well argued that competitive, controlling, reductionist argument is in the long term disadvantageous. Bowers (1997) for example, would situate the matter within the culture of denial which he claims underpins academic work. Bowers critiques the pervasive culture of denial, a culture in which the language-embedded deepest cultural assumptions about progress are not questioned, in fact they are often heartily endorsed even by environmentalists and Education for Sustainability advocates (1997). This is because environmentalists and radical educators often unwittingly share the modern liberal assumptions and taken-for-granted every day practices (Bowers, 1997, 28) upon which the ecological crisis is constructed. He shows how individualism, anthropocentrism, secularism, technocratic elitism, rationalism and rational thought and the progressive nature of new values and ideas rely upon the cultural code which is expressed through everyday language. These culturally based embedded linguistic assumptions inform the production of elite, high status knowledges (1997, 8, 9).

Respectful discussion, underpinned for example by Eisler's partnership model (1987, 192-193) and Rifkin's (1995, 83) empathetic knowledge can result in clarification of problems and new, more informed approaches to the identified problem. In cooperative circumstances which are based on mutual respect the discussion is underpinned by a notion of power as power-with and the attitude is open and conducive to revelation, improved awareness and synergy. A cooperative, relational approach would advance the articulation of the paradigm using the processes that comprise the paradigm, thereby modelling and exemplifying the non-violent, non-dominative social change objectives. These approaches and their accompanying attitudes may contribute to the resolution of problems that have seemed insoluble merely because the philosophers' or theorists' views have been intransigent.

In this research, I will be looking for transformative methods which model the cooperative, relational approach. I wish to preserve the multiple voices of ecology. Boundaries, allegiances and loyalties, as well as the need for these, have often been artificially created and maintained due to the progress of the radical ecology debate over the nature and ultimate causation of environmental crises and over ways forward. Whilst these boundaries reflect the history of the field, there is now general
acknowledgment of the obstacles the boundaries present within an ecophilosophy of ecological action, social justice and peace, cooperation and self-care (for example, Plumwood, 1993; Warren, 1994b). There is recognition of the need to move forward towards cooperation across the boundaries, disciplines and loyalties within this field, whilst acknowledging and honouring the differences (Bookchin, 1991). Pezzoli (1996, 25) agrees that factionalism within environmentalism is unhelpful, opting instead for a socially critical approach to the development of an “ecumenical spirit”, enabling the celebrating of commonalities as well as differences.

2.2.3 A Portrait of Radical Ecology and Implications for Education

In this final radical ecology subsection, I use the metaphor of Sarah's circle to illustrate radical ecology. I follow this by summarising the implication of radical ecology for education. To demonstrate the contrast with Jacob's ladder, I shall commence with a reproduction of Fox's chart (1990, 45).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Climbing Jacob's Ladder</th>
<th>Dancing Sarah's Circle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Up/Down</td>
<td>In/Out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flat Earth</td>
<td>Global village</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climbing</td>
<td>Dancing, celebrating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sisyphian</td>
<td>Satisfying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competition</td>
<td>Shared ecstasies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restrictive, elitist: Survival of the fittest</td>
<td>Welcoming, non-elitist: Survival of all</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hierarchical</td>
<td>Democratic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Violent</td>
<td>Strong and gentle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sky-oriented</td>
<td>Earth oriented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruthlessly independent</td>
<td>Interdependent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jealous and judgement-oriented</td>
<td>Pride-producing and non-judgemental</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract, distant-making</td>
<td>Nurturing and sensual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear, ladder-like</td>
<td>Curved, circle-like</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theistic (immanent or transcendent)</td>
<td>Panentheistic (transparent)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love of neighbour is separate from love of what is at the top of the ladder</td>
<td>Love of neighbour is love of God</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. The contrast Between Business-as-Usual (Jacob’s ladder) and Radical Ecology (Sarah’s Circle)
Fox (1990, 45 - 67) introduces Sarah's circle as a story of joy, wonder and unexpected transformation. In the biblical story, Sarah was ninety years old and Abraham was one hundred years old when God told them that they would bear a child. Although she greeted the news with a laugh of disbelief, Sarah bore a baby whom they named Isaac. It is a story of creativity, birthing, fruitfulness and divine wisdom rather than human knowledge. I shall condense Fox's work on Sarah's circle. In contrast to the up/down of a ladder, the circle dance is in/out. It is never Sisyphean and is always satisfying because circle dancing reminds us of our relation to the earth and each other.

As Fox comments, dancing is transformative but this is rarely the case with ladder climbing. Whilst ladder climbing is intrinsically competitive and combative, circle dancing is about sharing ecstasies. In dancing there are no winners and losers, but if the circle gets too big it is a simple matter to break into smaller circles and continue the dance. In contrast to the hierarchical violence of a ladder where one becomes increasingly distant, the circle is intrinsically democratic and non-violent, because people can look into the eyes of each other. Where tears exist, authentic humans do not wish to be the cause of the tears. Further, at ground level which is eye to eye, what one does to another can be reciprocated. The ground level is the built-in equaliser.

Rather than the ruthless independence of the ladder, the circle dance can only be one of interdependence because one cannot dance a circle dance alone. Likewise in a circle dance, hands are extended to others to assist as well as in celebration. Whilst the ladder leads up to abstraction, the circle dance is one of sensuality, nurturing and earthiness. Thus the circle is feminist, compassionate and empathetic. The ladder is linear whilst the circle, like the mandala, is intrinsically harmonious with the cosmos because of the corresponding energy of the universe and the rounded earth. Fox (1990, 51) writes that the creator of the universe was biased in favour of the curve! In contrast to the notion of climbing the ladder to seek God, the panentheistic, circle image is of God in the midst. Therefore rather than climbing up and up to seek God, one only has to awaken more and more fully to what is already pulsating around us. Likewise, one does not have to climb down the ladder to seek one's neighbour, rather God is found where the neighbour is suffering or needs to celebrate. Therefore, love and justice are not separate. Fox writes:

Neither an individual nor a society can be, in its basic energies, both ladder-climbing and circle-dancing. We must make a decision for one or
the other. It is clear which [one] our society …has chosen for us for the most part. … But there are alternatives. (1990, 53)

I shall conclude this chapter by suggesting the implications for education of each of the three broad subsections of radical ecology. Radical ecology suggests that education systems need to be reoriented so that schools would enculturate what Sartouris (2000) refers to as 'survival oriented' systems of activity. The implications of ecological democracy are that education needs to be dual-focused, firstly towards the development in the learner of a complete awareness of the local ecosystem and the role of people within it, as well as skills and abilities to participate in local decision-making through an orientation towards process. Importantly schools should function as an ecological community in which participatory decision-making skills are modelled for all learners as part of the school culture. Orr writes:

Ecologically designed communities become a way to teach about land use, landscapes, and human connections (2002, 32).

Ecological sustainability implies a recovery of civic competence. I see no prospect whatsoever for building a sustainable society without an active, engaged, informed, and competent citizenry (1992, 84).

Ecological democracy suggests that a goal of school is environmental citizenship.

The implication of ecofeminism for school people is that a primary focus of education should be the development in the learner of peace, with the ability to create and maintain relationships based upon real peace and non-violence. Teachers and parents need to learn and model these types of relationships in their own lives and in the school, in order to enable the learners to develop social capital. Ecofeminism would advocate socially critical teaching in what Smyth, W.J. (2002) calls: “the socially just school”. The implications of deep ecology for school people are that a primary focus of education needs to be the ecological realisation or actualisation of the self of the student, through which he/she can develop a caring, deep involvement with the social and natural worlds. The learner needs to see themselves as a citizen of a particular biotic community, which is one of many biotic communities (Harding, 1997, 9). Deep ecologists say that teachers and parents need to develop their own ecological selves

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17 Smyth, W.J. (2002, 5-6) writes that the notion of social capital is now one of the most usurped and conceptually stretched sociological ideas. In this context, I use it to mean supportive relationships through which barriers and impediments to participation in school may be addressed.
through practical experience of interconnectedness so that they can model the practices and teach with wisdom.

2.3 Towards Sustainability as Process

In this section, I review literature on sustainability, followed by Australian and West Australian policies relating to sustainability.

2.3.1 On Sustainability

The term ‘sustainability’ could be added to Smyth’s (2001, 38) list of aerosol words such as excellence, quality and choice which are not clearly defined but are sprayed around with regularity. Simply, sustainability\(^\text{18}\) is the ability to sustain. According to Babcock-Gove (1981), ‘sustain’ comes from the root word ‘sustinere’, which means to nourish and endure. The meaning of sustain is:

1: to give support… 2: to provide for the support or maintenance of: supply with sustenance: NOURISH <plant life sustains the living world> 3a: to cause to continue… 4a: … support the weight of, hold up… 4b: to carry or withstand… 5: to prevent (as one’s mind or spirit) from sinking or giving away 6: ENDURE as a: to submit to without failing or yielding… b: to bear… 7a: to support as true, legal or just. (Babcock-Gove, 1981, emphases given)

From the same root word is sustenance, which means:

1a: means of support, maintenance or subsistence: LIVING… b(1): FOOD, REFRESHMENTS (2): NOURISHMENT 2a: the act of sustaining or the state of being sustained b: supplying or being supplied with the necessaries of life…3: something that gives support, endurance or strength. (Babcock-Gove, 1981, emphases given).

The meanings of these words relate to supporting, withstanding, refreshing, living, the act of sustaining, giving strength, enabling to continue, as well as the necessaries of life. Sustain is a word with connotations of care and nourishment in ordinary discourse. However, the use of the term is problematic because of its variety of interpretations about exactly what is to be sustained. Wals and Jickling state that the problem with the use of the term: ‘sustainability’, is that it:

\(^\text{18}\)The terms ‘sustainability’ and ‘sustainable development’, both nouns, have closely similar usage. They refer, with only differences of emphasis, to the same group of meanings although some writers including Scott (2002) see sustainability as a goal or vision and sustainable development as a process. I shall use the term being used by each writer I quote.
As Davison (2001, 64) says, the term has been applied as readily to the productivity of a weapons factory as it has to the utilising of solar energy. A simple explanation of the problem is illustrated below:

The earliest meaning of sustain is to “support,” "uphold the course of" or "keep into being." What corporate chief, treasury minister, or international civil servant would not embrace this meaning? Another meaning is "to provide with food and drink, or the necessities of life." What underpaid urban worker or landless peasant would not accept this meaning? Still another definition is "to endure without giving way or yielding." What small farmer or entrepreneur does not resist "yielding" to the expansionary impulses of big capital and the state, and thereby take pride in "enduring"? (O'Connor, 1994, 152 cited in Pezzoli, 1996, 4)

Cultural or Technocratic Discourses of Sustainability

Davison (2001) writes about the ambition of humans to sustain the sources of our sustenance in our co-evolution, which is in our cultural and ecological contexts. There are a wide range of competing rhetorical currencies, however (Scott, 2002). Davison describes the discursive domain of cultural sustainability, which celebrates sustaining things as well as the discursive domain of technocratic sustainability, which celebrates human control of the world. Davison writes that the central notion of both these discourses is the ambition of humans to sustain the sources of our sustenance in our co-evolution, in our cultural and ecological contexts. The ambitions in the two discourses are incommensurate, however. The cultural discourse features political and social justice, moral enrichment and enlivening spiritual practices, while the technocratic discourse features optimal, cost-effective, technological configurations. He claims that both are cultural projects and one is no less a socio-political, moral or spiritual project than the other. However, the technocratic agenda extends the cultural forces that are reducing our social and ecological reality to that of instrumentalism. I understand the differentiation to amount to the question of whether we wish to sustain technology to sustain the mastery of nature to sustain our lives, or do we wish to sustain the ethical, cultural, metaphysical and spiritual possibilities of ourselves as fully relational, embodied beings? The latter understanding is in line with that of the United Nations
Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation’s (UNESCO) document: *Educating for a Sustainable Future*, which sees sustainability as an emerging vision:

...In truth, it is as much an ethical precept as a scientific concept, as concerned with notions of equity as with theories of global warming. Sustainable development is widely understood to involve the natural sciences and economics, but *it is even more fundamentally concerned with culture: with the values people hold and how they perceive their relations with others*. It responds to an imperative need to imagine a new basis for relationships among peoples and with the habitat that sustains human life. (1997a, para. 36, my emphasis)

Rachel Carson, whose book: “Silent Spring” was first published in 1962, wrote:

We stand now where two roads diverge. But unlike the roads in Robert Frost’s familiar poem, they are not equally fair. The road we have long been travelling is deceptively easy, a smooth super highway on which we progress with great speed, but at its end lies disaster. The other fork of the road – the one less travelled by – offers our last, our only hope to reach a destination that assures the preservation of our earth. (1971, 240)

She describes the deceptively easy road as “the control of nature” (1971, 257). Although she is talking about chemical technologies rather than all technologies, her differentiation refers to the difference between the technocratic and the human-nature centred solutions to unsustainable human progress.

The term ‘sustainable development’ was used at least during the 1974 Cocoyok conference which was organised by the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), and possibly earlier (Pezzoli, 1996, 5). According to Pezzoli (1996, 5) the Cocoyok conference brought together two groups of participants. One group would prioritise the earth’s ‘inner limits’, which referred to the human need for shelter, food and water rather than simple economic growth, while the other group would prioritise the earth’s ‘outer limits’ – the planet’s physical environment and resource capacity to sustain the economic growth. Pezzoli writes that generally, the 1970s mark a turning point in the use of the concept of sustainability to guide development (1996, 4).

**The Economy as the Organising Principle for Technocentric Discourses**

There is a huge volume of literature on sustainable development. In his extensive transdisciplinary literature review, Pezzoli (1996) identifies ten overlapping categories.
Many writers view sustainable development as an oxymoron. For example, Annecke says:

Now I am one of those critics who believe that ‘sustainable development’ is an oxymoron – you know, like ‘military intelligence’ or a ‘kindly rapist’ – a contradictory term which may, on occasion, be used to good effect, but under present global conditions makes only for a lie. A lie which has become plausible and is hard to undo. (2002, 2)

These writers critique the definitions of development which privilege economic discourses, pointing out that economic growth is part of the problem not the solution. The belief that the economy will find solutions to resource depletion underpins a global reorganisation of trade, finance and industry (Ormerod, 1994, 36 and 78, Davison, 2001, 15 – 26). Accordingly, countries have moved from a welfare-based to a competitive state, pursuing a free market ideology in order to compete in the global economy (Stevenson, 2002, 191).

Pezzoli (1996, 4) comments that the most widely-cited definition of sustainable development is the Brundtland Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) (1987), titled “Our common future”. This is development which meets:

...the [human] needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. (UN, 1987)

This is still the current definition of sustainable development (UN, 2001). The 1987 interpretation of sustainable development is underpinned by a technocratic understanding. It is based on the premise of economic growth and expansionism, together with better technological solutions as the means of relieving the interconnected problem of poverty and environmental degradation. For example, the United Nations General Assembly agreed that it:

Concurs with the Commission that the critical objectives for environment and development policies which follow from the need for sustainable development must include preserving peace, reviving growth and changing its quality, remedying the problems of poverty and satisfying human needs, addressing the problems of population growth and of conserving and enhancing the resource base, reorienting technology and managing risk, and merging environment and economics in decision-making. (UN, 1987, my emphases)
The Rio Declaration\textsuperscript{19} and the Agenda 21 understanding of sustainable development, which resulted from the Earth Summit in 1992, is also technocratic and reliant upon economic growth, but is broader and more encompassing of cultural agendas such as women’s interests. Agenda 21 is a comprehensive plan of action for local, regional and global frameworks, intended to bring about:

\[ \text{...a profound reorientation of all human society, unlike anything the world has ever experienced – a major shift in the priorities of both governments and individuals and an unprecedented redeployment of human and financial resources (Sitarz, 1992).} \]

The special contribution of Agenda 21 is its compulsion on governments to implement local participatory community-based decision-making so that the rights and cultural integrity of women and indigenous people are upheld (Sitarz, 1992, 34 – 35). Likewise, Agenda 21 requires communities to directly participate in the protection and management of local natural resources. Similarly, Agenda 21 requires networks of community-based sustainable development learning centres to be provided (ibid.).

Agenda 21 plans for action against six themes, which are as follows. 1. The quality of life on earth, meaning the poor must be encouraged and enabled to live sustaining livelihoods which do not destroy their resource base and the wealthy must drastically modify inefficient consumption patterns. 2. Efficient use of the earth’s natural resources, meaning that more efficient and environmentally acceptable methods of resource utilisation need to be developed. 3. The protection of our global commons, meaning that the atmosphere and the oceans play a dominant role in the planet’s life-sustaining processes and these need protection from pollution. 4. The management of human settlements, meaning that human settlements need adequate planning and infrastructure to properly provide for the industrial activities they engage in, as well as the energy plants, transportation systems and waste management they require, to cater for the population without polluting the environment or the people. 5. Chemicals and the management of waste, meaning that the management of human and industrial waste and the use of chemicals need to be improved to reduce the human suffering and economic burden. 6. Sustaining economic growth, meaning that debilitating poverty is of particular concern in the developing world so market forces should be used to stimulate the global transition to sustainability by reorienting the system of economic

\textsuperscript{19} The Rio Declaration is a statement outlining the principles, rights and obligations of states towards people, environment and development. It is published at URL: http://www.un.org/documents/ga/conf151/aconf15126-1annex1.htm.
accounting to reflect the true environmental and human costs of development and resource use. (Sitarz, 1992, 1 - 23)

The current official UN meaning of sustainable development, which is intended to bring about a truly sustainable lifeway, requires the integration of three key areas. These are written as follows:

Economic Growth and Equity – Today’s interlinked, global economic systems demand an integrated approach in order to foster responsible long-term growth while ensuring that no nation or community is left behind.

Conserving Natural Resources and the Environment - To conserve our environmental heritage and natural resources for future generations, economically viable solutions must be developed to reduce resource consumption, stop pollution and conserve natural habitats.

Social Development – Throughout the world, people require jobs, food, education, energy, health care, water and sanitation. While addressing these needs, the world community must also ensure that the rich fabric of cultural and social diversity, and the rights of workers, are respected, and that all members of society are empowered to play a role in determining their futures. (UN, 2001)

The UN, 2001 understanding of sustainable development is clearly underlined by economic growth and a reliance on economic solutions to problems of overconsumption, poverty and deep inequity. Fien and Trainer (1993, 31 – 33) refer to the economic/technocentric version of sustainable development as environmental functionalism, and identify four positions. These are firstly, completely unfettered economic growth; secondly, government regulations and technological fixes facilitate economic growth; thirdly, consumer demand and taxes, regulations and greener production facilitate economic growth; and finally, growth with equity, which is similar to the third category together with the global transfer of resources to meet basic human needs. Since the Brundtland Report of 1987, subsequent UN versions of sustainable development have moved along the continuum towards the end beyond which might be called the culture of sustainable living, however the basic structural problem of economic growth has been reaffirmed each time.

The World Resources Institute (1996-7) writes that economic growth when combined with per capita income trends may increase environmental degradation. Geo2000 and UNESCO (2002a) show how economic growth is interconnected to issues such as unequal consumption, loss of biodiversity, poverty, industrial pollution, global
warming, urban degradation, disease and malnutrition as well as the lower socio-and
economic status of women. The "Limits to Growth" report of 1972 provided evidence to
falsify the belief that continuous economic growth is possible. This report argued that
the ultimate limits to growth were determined by five basic factors: pollution, natural
resource depletion, industrialisation, food production and population. The report
concluded that following existing (1972) trends, the most likely scenario for the limits
to growth being reached were the middle of the twenty first century, after which there
would be a substantial decline in industrial capacity and population. Conservation
measures, as well as cooperation between people and governments, would be necessary
to prevent this from happening. Further, a state of equilibrium could be reached, so that
every person on earth could reach their potential and have their basic material needs met
(Meadows and Meadows, Randers and Behrens, 1972, 23-4).

According to Paul Ormerod (1994, 36 and 78) economists have strongly criticised the
initial Limits to Growth exercises, mostly arguing using the price mechanism and the
theorems of competitive equilibrium. Simply, the economists’ perspective is that supply
and demand principles would cause price rises in the depleted resource, which would
provide sufficient money to explore and find new sources or would produce an
alternative source. However, Ormerod states categorically that this argument does not
hold, for two main reasons. Firstly, the price mechanism could not always be relied
upon, that is, the market is likely to fail; and secondly, when a 'future' is included in a
standard model of competitive equilibrium (which is usually 'timeless') many of the
results do not hold, yielding the possibility of disastrous consequences. In other words,
sustainable development, where development is taken as growth, is unlikely to be
achievable over the long term, since it is highly likely that there are limits to growth.
With the view that the economy will find solutions to the problems of unsustainable
development, many biospherical problems such as salinity in Australia are likely to be
irreversible already, because the market solution might be to grow Australia's food in a
location in the world where it can be produced more cheaply and transported here
(Berry 2001, 24 - 29, Monbiot, 2001, 16 - 17, Shiva, 2001, 12 - 13). Cortese says:

…[W]e are a society living off its natural capital, not its income. We are
acting like a planet in liquidation. In essence, humans are conducting an
uncontrolled experiment, unprecedented in scope and scale, that
represents a significant reversal of the natural evolution which produced
clean air and water and the increasingly complex and diverse ecosystems which made human evolution possible. (1999, 1)

In his book on the contested meanings of sustainability, Davison (2001, 87) critiques the technocentrism that informs our late modern existence. He suggests that androcentrism, dualism, atomism, mechanism, instrumentalism, anthropocentrism, Eurocentrism and other unsustainable 'isms' (of domination) are most effectively understood as accounts of our "embodied, technological forms of life." Davison uses Plumwood's analysis of the structure of dualistic logic to reveal previously unexplicated dualisms including technospherical stability/human agency, theory/practice, human/technology, science/technology and artifice/nature, which inform the ecomodernist project. These dualisms result in the 'backgrounding' of human agency, practice, technology and nature by the domination or foregrounding of technospherical stability, theory, humans, science and artifice.

Ecomodernism

I have included this section on ecomodernism because it is commonly asserted by its proponents to be an ecological version of the economic growth/technocentric notions of sustainability. The ecomodernist project is described by Davison (2001, 22 - 23) as the undertaking to reconcile free-market economics with sustainable development. This project is contingent upon the capability of economic policy to focus wealth generation towards more environmentally efficient technology. Davison (2001, 22 - 23) shows how in ecomodernism the environment is internalised within neoclassical models of economic growth. There are serious difficulties with ecomodernism. These are firstly, its continuing dependence on economic growth for environmental sustainability. Secondly, it is predicated upon "unfettered technological optimism" (Davison, 2001, 22). Thirdly, it rejects lifestyle changes by consumers, claiming that these are unnecessary (because a trend towards simplicity would reduce economic growth). Fourthly, it is underpinned by the illusory belief that natural resources are plentifully abundant (and in cases where they become depleted the market will discover other or improved replacement sources). Fifthly, it promotes market mechanisms of free trade over government regulation and intervention - an eschewal of democracy and democratic government. Sixthly, it claims that market decisions will focus technological change in the direction of ecological efficiency when the environment is internalised by
the market. Through an analysis of published descriptions of industrial ecology and
dustrial metabolism, Davison illustrates how ecomodernism promotes:

[C]oal cleaning technology over education programs encouraging less
reliance on frivolous domestic appliances… electric cars over bicycle-
centred reform of cities…nuclear power over backyard solar ovens.
(2001, 28)

These technologies aim to sustain the economic profitability of corporations.

The problem with ecomodernism is that it contains insufficient social critique or
critique of the consumption of the products of corporations. For example, Davison
(2001, 29) exemplifies the new life-cycle approach of the Z1 BMW sports car which
can have its 'skin' shed to update design or repair accident damage as required. An
alternative, more sustainable response might have critiqued the ethics and pragmatics of
increased cars, congestion and roads, with the attendant social consequences of
alienation, atomism and isolation produced by the car. This means that through
corporate propaganda and reduced governance in the drive to sustain maximal profits,
ecomodernism sets the planet on a course of unregulated corporate domination of
people and nature. It is underpinned by the possibility that the corporations, acting on
behalf of the economy as a surrogate God, might be benevolent towards people and
nature. Therefore, ecomodernism cannot be ecologically, socially or culturally
sustainable.

Cooptation of the Environment Movement

Davison (2001) also draws attention to the new liaison of 'ecoefficiency' between
environmentalists and businesses - businesses because they are interested in increasing
profits and environmentalists because they believe that the technological agenda is a
radical agenda of social and environmental ethics. This is a profitable liaison for
industrialists and a potentially lethal cooptation for environmentalists. As Davison
explains it:

[T]he adoption of sustainable development by powerful economic
interests does not indicate that ecological awareness has been smuggled
into the core deliberations of the technological society. It indicates the
exact opposite - namely, that the interests of the technological society
have been smuggled into ecological awareness. (2001, 38)

According to Davison, in this way the ecological crisis is reinvented as a vast techno-
economic opportunity about which we are urged to be profoundly optimistic. This
opportunity is supported by the jargon of 'one-world' of technological and often spiritual unity, amounting to a neo-colonialism of oppressive efficiency and productivity against the global south, leading to the realisation that:

While some are destined to live in the mansions of the global neighborhood, the majority of those long oppressed by the eras of colonialism and developmentalism will undoubtedly swell its ghettos. (Davison, 2001, 55)

Pezzoli (1996, 20) describes the phenomenon of cooption of the environment movement as the capitalisation of nature, or the semiotic expansion of capital. The first wave of ecopolitical activism of twenty to thirty years ago was a radical one which was intended to overturn national and international systems supporting the economic and political hierarchies of anti-environmental industrialism (Davison, 13 - 14, 45). It seems to me that the irony of the ecomodernist project is that it appears to have successfully coopted the environmental movement. Aga Khan writes of other movements which have coopted sustainable development for their own unethical, economic goals. These include the ‘wise use’ movement. This movement claims it is underpinned by ‘sustainable use’, which Aga Khan describes as “mask[ing] activities which are exactly the opposite” (2002, 20). He argues that the mindset which is underpinned by the oxymoronic, economic growth model of sustainable development indirectly fosters corruption as well as the corporate takeover of governance. Annan, on the cover of the UN Global Compact brochure, says:

Let us choose to unite the power of markets with the authority of universal ideals. Let us choose to reconcile the creative forces of private entrepreneurship with the needs of the disadvantaged and the requirements of future generations. (UN, 2001b)

He writes that the companies who sign the compact “all aspire to manage global growth in a responsible manner…” (UN, 2001b). Monbiot (2000), in commenting on the launch of the UN Global Compact, claims that: because there is no commitment or external accountability required, the UN “…appears to be turning itself into an enforcement agency for the global economy”. Writers such as Monbiot and Aga Khan would say the objectives of the UN Global Compact are impossible to achieve.

There is considerable concern from many sectors that sustainability goals are not being achieved. The world was warned of the consequence of economic trends in 1992, by one thousand, five hundred senior scientists. In short:
Warning. We the undersigned, senior members of the world's scientific community, hereby warn all humanity of what lies ahead. A great change in our stewardship of the earth and the life on it, is required, if vast human misery is to be avoided and our global home on this planet is not to be irretrievably mutilated. (Abragam et al., 1992)

In the brochure which was published prior to the 2002 World Summit for Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, Annan stated the following:

We live on one planet, connected in a delicate, intricate web of ecological, social, economic and cultural relationships that shape our lives. If we are to achieve sustainable development, we will need to display greater responsibility – for the ecosystems on which all life depends, for each other as a single human community, and for the generations that will follow our own, living tomorrow with the consequences of the decisions we take today (2002, 1).

Referring to government commitments to Agenda 21, Annan commented that commitment alone is not enough because full integration of the sustainability pillars of society, economy and environment have not yet been achieved and neither has there been an abandonment of unsustainable practices in sufficient measure (2002, 3). Nonetheless, no fundamental changes were made to the meaning of sustainable development at the Johannesburg conference. A recommitment was made to the Rio Declaration and the plan of action for Agenda 21 was extended. A new commitment was made to the United Nations Millennium Goals 20 as well as to the outcomes of United Nations conferences and international agreements since 1992 (WSSD, 2002a).

The positive aspects of the Johannesburg WSSD include its orientation towards partnerships and participation in decision-making through its strong endorsement of the inclusion of civil society. Although the ‘partnerships approach’ was criticised for favouring business at the WSSD 21, the documentation reinforces strong UN commitment to regional and subregional participation through Agenda 21 recommittments (UN, 2002, 52).

Within the interlocking complexities of society there appear to be two meta-theories in antipathy which are the forces of globalisation against humanity and nature. This phenomenon is referred to as the Entrepreneur versus the Ecologist (Swimme and Berry 1994, 250). The forces of globalisation are evident in the ever-increasing disparity

20 The UN Millennium Goals are published at Url: http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/
21 There was a large involvement of civil society in the conference, however these groups would say they were involved but not adequately heard (eg. WWF, 2002b).
between rich and poor, the increasing power and wealth of corporations and a steeply increasing number and scale of human-induced environmental disasters resulting in unsustainable social and economic systems across the world. The tension is between the mechanistic and the ecological, and between the world as a collection of objects and the world as a communion of subjects (Swimme and Berry, 1994, 250, Sterling, 2001, 58-59). The Entrepreneurial perspective is underpinned by the view that the economy will find solutions to a wide range of social, environmental and resource problems. However as Orr (2002, 112) comments, “there is no way to hold a global economy accountable”. The Entrepreneurial perspective supports business-as-usual which is hierarchical, violent, upwardly oriented, ruthlessly independent, egoistical and judgement-oriented (Fox, 1990). It is linear and in Fox’s Jacob’s ladder metaphor where there is only up or down, there is always a sense of not having arrived, still further to go. Every time one arrives at a new rung there is still another, then another.

I have critiqued economic and technocratic versions of development to reveal their tendency towards sustainability of consumerism rather than radical ecological objectives and I have drawn attention to the problem of unintentional collusion by some environmental activists in economic and technocratic practices of development. The problem remains to arrive at an understanding of sustainability to enlighten the cultural discourses of sustainability, which addresses the purposes of political, social, moral, economic and ecological justice.

Cultural Discourses of Sustainability: Choosing Sustainability

Meadows, Meadows and Randers updated their 1972 research in 1992, which confirmed and strengthened their conclusions. The new conclusions are:

1. Human use of many essential resources and generation of many kinds of pollutants have already surpassed rates that are physically sustainable. Without significant reductions in material and energy flows, there will be in the coming decades an uncontrolled decline in per capita food output, energy use, and industrial production.

2. This decline is not inevitable. To avoid it two changes are necessary. The first is a comprehensive revision of policies and practices that perpetuate growth in material consumption and in population. The second is a rapid, drastic increase in the efficiency with which materials and energy are used.
3. A sustainable society is still technically and economically possible. It could be much more desirable than a society that tries to solve its problems by constant expansion. The transition to a sustainable society requires a careful balance between long-term and short-term goals and an emphasis on sufficiency, equity, and quality of life rather than on quantity of output. It requires more than productivity and more than technology; it also requires maturity, compassion, and wisdom. (1992, 4)

Meadows et al. regard these conclusions as a living choice for sustainability, rather than a death sentence. They believe the challenge can be met and that an improved world is a possibility. From the perspective of Meadows et al., the first step is the acceptance of physical limits. They regard moving from unsustainability as an opportunity to “stop battering against the earth’s limits and to start transcending self-imposed and unnecessary limits in human institutions, mindsets, beliefs, and ethics” (1992, 5). This is by no means a unanimous position, however. For example, Suzuki (1999, 38) writes that humanity is on a suicidal path because the limits to our capacity to consume from nature have long been exceeded.

There is conjecture as to the soundness of scientific modelling procedures as well as to the predictions that are made accordingly. Scott reports that it is commonplace for data and interpretations to be reported pessimistically (2002, 8). Further, some believe that it is in humanity’s best interest to alarm the population so that they will respond by taking precautions (ibid.). Scott comments that how we see these matters is determined by our construction of reality. To the ‘nature as social construction’ proponents, deep ecologists such as Abram would suggest direct experience to confirm propositional beliefs. Deep ecologists might point to forests, bushlands and wetlands that disappear daily under housing developments, vineyards, industrial blocks and new roads in the South West of Western Australia, to illustrate that social construction is also a conceptually limited position because there is a bottom line of indisputable facts.

The debate about the meaning of sustainable development is compounded by debates about its language application. The Sustainable Development Education Panel investigated various notions of sustainable development before analysing the language problem. They located definitions which regard sustainable development as about learning, others which are a reference to a kind of development, others which regard
sustainable development as a process, and still others which refer to it as liveability (1998a, 4). They provide four examples:

HM Government

Sustainable Development is about the learning needed to maintain and improve our quality of life for generations to come. It is about equipping individuals, communities, groups, businesses and government to live and act sustainably; as well as giving them an understanding of the environmental, social and economic issues involved. It is about preparing for the world in which we will live in the next century, and making sure that we are not found wanting.

Brundtland Commission

Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Quote from Sustainable Lifestyles Conference

‘Sustainable Development is a process which enables people to realise their potential and improve their quality of life in ways which protect and enhance the earth’s life support system.’

Quote from Sustainable Lifestyles Conference

‘Sustainable Development is about liveability. It is about creating and maintaining healthy communities and economies which can lead to a healthy environment and enhanced qualities of life. Communities working towards the goal of Sustainable Development commit themselves to examining the links, and trade-offs of the choices they face.’ (Sustainable Development Education Panel, 1998a, 4, my emphasis)

These examples illustrate the centrality of education to the task of progressing society towards sustainability, which is a life long process. I shall investigate the problem of language further, in the Education for Sustainability section below. Fien (1997, 22) comments that sustainable development does not have a commonly accepted meaning because it results from discussions between parties who have disparate worldviews. Interpretations of sustainable development are value-laden and serve particular economic, political or social interests and need to be critically assessed. Jickling (1992, 5) urges a socially critical understanding of sustainable development which reveals: “the economic, political, philosophical and epistemological roots of environmental issues and adequate examinations of social alternatives”. The following UNESCO definition is an example of a socially critical understanding of sustainability:

22 Learning for sustainability is generally seen as a lifelong process, and is sometimes referred to as the “K to Gray” curriculum (for example Dabelko and Godfrey, 2002).
The concept of sustainability encompasses not only environment but also poverty, population, health, food security, democracy, human rights and peace. Sustainability is, in the final analysis, a moral and ethical imperative in which cultural diversity and traditional knowledge need to be respected. (1997c, item 10)

There is a huge variability in descriptions of spheres or systems for designing for sustainability. Pezzoli (1996) describes what he calls a political ecology of sustainable development, which comprises four principal spheres of concern, each with a key challenge. The spheres of concern are: environmental context, legal and institutional terrain, culture and civil society, and economy and technology. The spheres of concern are listed below, together with the key challenge and first sentence of each key challenge description:

Environmental context (Holism and coevolution: to better understand how the environment and development interrelate we need to develop a holistic worldview…),

Legal and institutional terrain (Empowerment and community-building: an ecological perspective brings out aspects of social and political rights which the liberal paradigm has neglected…),

Culture and civil society (Social justice and equity: efforts to work out the conceptual, technical, and organisational bases for sustainability will be incomplete without explicit attention to the ethics and moral philosophy involved…), and

Economy and technology (Sustainable production and reproduction: Sustainable development calls for more than economic and technical adjustments…). (Pezzoli, 1996, 11)

Fien (2001, 4) and UNESCO (2002b, 8) propose pillars of sustainability which are grounded in four interdependent systems:

Biophysical systems which provide the life support systems for all life, human and non-human;

Economic systems which provide a continuing means of livelihood (jobs and money) for people;

Social and cultural systems which provide ways for people to live together peacefully, equitably and with respect for human rights and dignity; and

Political systems through which power is exercised fairly and democratically to make decisions about the way social and economic systems use the biophysical environment.

Yencken and Wilkinson (2000, 9, 343-364) use a similar approach, but distinguish

23 UNESCO’s pillars are the same as Fien’s, with the exception of the lack of cultural systems in the UNESCO version.
between the social and cultural in Fien’s third pillar, using the cultural rather than the political as the fourth. They write that a new politics of the environment underpinned by strong environmental policy is necessary. Of these three approaches, UNESCO’s and Fien’s are the strongest in terms of political emphasis. A further approach, that of Orr, relies on politics, suggesting that the reform of the economy that is required is a political, not an economic choice (2002, 108). Orr articulates the problem as a design problem. Importantly, the political dimension enables an alternative organising principle towards sustainable development, that of civil development towards deep democracy, rather than economic globalisation. This approach re-characterises the problem of sustainability as one of human decision-making rather than one of a poorly self-regulating economy. With politics as the organising principle for sustainability, the problem of democracy and participation are central spheres of concern.

**The Political Pillar as the Organising Principle for Sustainability**

Approaches to sustainability which use the political pillar as the organising dimension of a radical ecology philosophy are of particular interest to educators for sustainability, because they have important implications for the organising of schools as sustainable learning communities. Huckle explains sustainability as the mediating bridge between the environment and the development lobbies, and characterises the technocratic versions of sustainability as the weak mode, and the cultural versions as the strong mode. He writes:

> In the strong form, [sustainability] represents a revised form of self-reliant community development which sustains people’s livelihoods using appropriate technology (1996, 9, 10).

Orr (2002, 116) writes of the significance of human scale communities in which consumers can “decide to become citizens and take control of their lives and livelihoods.” He says:

> You and I will have to do the hard work of reviving democracy and rebuilding a decent country and ecologically sustainable communities the old-fashioned way: from the bottom up (ibid.).

These approaches use a strong, participative form of democracy in order to design for and organise the social, economic and environmental pillars of sustainability.
Orr writes of the potential of the ecological/cultural (rather than the technocentric) view of sustainability, which:

> requires a rejuvenation of civic culture and the rise of an ecologically literate and ecologically competent citizenry who understand global issues, but who also know how to live in their places (1992, 1).

He draws particular attention to the correlation between environmental degradation and decay in the concept of citizenship, arguing that they are mutually reinforcing trends. Therefore, change is only possible through an appropriate politic and an active, informed citizenry (1992, 2). In working towards the development of an enlivened political arena, Orr warns of our society’s dismal history in attempting to change society for the better. He cites Chateaubriand in stating: “forests to precede civilisation, deserts to follow” (1992, 19). He says that both the crisis of sustainability and the concept of a sustainable society are without precedent, however he agrees that there are many precedents of sustainable communities, and cites Indigenous communities and the Amish as examples (2002, 5-8, 1992, 74). He points to the naivety of new-age spirituality and the unlikelihood of market strategies making meaningful structural change (1992, 68). Seeing environmental deterioration as political failure in decision-making, strategies for change and reorganisation should realistically begin with politics.

Orr says that firstly, clarity is required about what can be done locally and what can only be done elsewhere. For example, carbon emission controls should be international. Secondly, large scale decentralisation should occur for purposes of social resilience, human scale, true economy and environmental impact (1992, 72). Thirdly, bioregionalism to facilitate the ecological potential and integrate with economy, culture, education and governance should be implemented. In suggesting bioregionalism, Orr emphasises the importance of citizenship and participation in the process of civil renewal, resulting in strong democracy (1992, 75). He writes:

> Politics is the process by which we define the terms of our collective existence... there is no such thing as political non-involvement. To avoid political matters is only to leave them to others (Orr, 1992, 75).

In describing appropriate political leadership, he writes that transformative leaders are ‘servant leaders’ rather than ‘leader first’. The servant leaders are characterised by listening and serving, whilst the latter have innate drives for power, recognition or wealth (1992, 78-79). Stanfield (2000) lists servant leadership as an important quality of learning organisations, which are intrinsically transformative.
In 1991, the IUCN, UNEP and WWF in the document *Caring for the Earth: A Strategy for Sustainable Living*, defined sustainable development\(^{24}\) as a process:

> The real aim of development is to improve the quality of human life. It is a process that enables human beings to realize their potential, build self-confidence and lead lives of dignity and fulfilment.

In stressing the requirement for global, national, community and individual change in attitudes and practices, they point out that local communities should be the focus for the change to sustainable living, and emphasise that they must have the delegated power to act because changes required for sustainable living require that people have an effective voice in decisions which affect them (IUCN, UNEP and WWF, 1991, 3-8). The Earth Charter further develops and deepens principles for sustainable living, and the secretariat is currently deciding whether to seek UN endorsement in 2003 or 2004, after priority was not allocated to their acceptance at the Johannesburg WSSD (Earth Charter Steering Committee and International Secretariat, 2002, 10). The Earth Charter, which has keen civil society support, strongly advocates local participation in decision-making, based upon a commitment to responsibility for one another, the greater community of life and generations of the future (Earth Charter International Secretariat, nd).

Orr (1992, 29-37) proposes six characteristics of the meaning for sustainability:

- **A.** Humans are limited and fallible: in our ability to comprehend and coordinate things beyond some scale; and in the sense of good with willingness to do it.
- **B.** Sustainability requires an active, competent citizenry.
- **C.** Sustainability is rooted in past practices and traditions as much as in the creation of new knowledge. (Traditional knowledge is location specific and coevolved between social and ecological systems.)
- **D.** Nature should be seen as a model for design (of houses, farms, neighbourhoods, regional economies, cities) as well as a set of limits.
- **E.** Sustainability considers nature’s implications for scale and decentralisation.
- **F.** Sustainability is underpinned by an epistemology of interrelatedness and interconnectedness.

He describes the challenge of sustainability as a design challenge unlike any other. Rather than making “greener widgets”, it is about making appropriate communities to

\(^{24}\) Although this definition supported contextualised economic growth, they have now argued strongly that it should never ‘come first’ because an ‘economic growth first’ approach invariably leads to damaged ecosystems and livelihoods and wealth disparities
fit their place with “elegant frugality” (2002, 11). Finally, Orr proposes a principle that he has drawn from Aldo Leopold, Thomas Jefferson and others, which would avoid “intergenerational remote tyranny”, which is being ruled by the dead due to their imposition on their descendants. He states it as follows:

No person, institution, or nation has the right to participate in activities that contribute to large-scale, irreversible changes of the earth’s biogeochemical cycles or undermine the integrity, stability, and beauty of the earth’s ecologies, the consequences of which would fall on succeeding generations as a form of irrevocable remote tyranny (2002, 149).

Education is a central need in this new ethic.

2.3.2 Current Australian and Western Australian Sustainability Policies

The Environment Australia website reports that it is in the process of analysing the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development documents to identify where progress has already been made by Australia, and where further action is needed. Australia’s official definition of sustainable development is that of the 1987 Brundtland Report (Environment Australia, 2002a). Australia has produced its own definition of ecologically sustainable development as part of a National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development, as below:

Put simply, ESD means using, conserving and enhancing the community's resources so that ecological processes, on which life depends, are maintained and quality of life for both present and future generations is increased. It requires changes in the nature of production and consumption so that they can better satisfy human needs while using fewer raw materials and producing less waste. The key to ESD is integrating environment and development considerations in decision-making. (Environment Australia, 1992)

The guiding principles for the Australian 1992 ESD strategy are listed below:

- decision-making processes should effectively integrate both long and short-term economic, environmental, social and equity considerations
- where there are threats of serious or irreversible environmental damage, lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason for postponing measures to prevent environmental degradation
- the global dimension of environmental impacts of actions and policies should be recognised and considered

(IUCN, 2002d).
the need to develop a strong, growing and diversified economy which can enhance the capacity for environmental protection should be recognised
the need to maintain and enhance international competitiveness in an environmentally sound manner should be recognised
cost effective and flexible policy instruments should be adopted, such as improved valuation, pricing and incentive mechanisms
decisions and actions should provide for broad community involvement on issues which affect them (ibid.)

The policy specifies balance, in stating that the guiding principles and core objectives need to be taken as a package, and that no one principle or objective should predominate. The objectives are based on individual and community well-being, intergenerational equity and protection of life and biodiversity (Environment Australia, 1992). The policy is underpinned by economic growth as a key foundation component of development, but the specification of equal importance for each of the principles and objectives and broad community involvement in decision-making puts the policy away from the economic/technocentric end of Fien and Trainer’s (1993) continuum of positions on environmental functionalism. The 1992 ESD Strategy is still the most recent Australian sustainability strategy (Environment Australia, 2002).

The Western Australian Government has prepared a State Sustainability Strategy, which was released in September 2003. It is comprehensive with a large ethical component. It defines sustainability as:

Meeting the needs of current and future generations through an integration of environmental protection, social advancement and economic prosperity. (Government of Western Australia, 2003, 24, my emphasis)

It requires all public auditing to be in triple bottom lines, so that there is net benefit in each of the environmental, social and economic fields. The strategy would require that economy, society and environment be integrated together for sustainability. The government’s sustainability goals are proposed as:

- Ensure that the way we government is driving the transition to a sustainable future.
- Play our part in solving the global challenges of sustainability.
- Value and protect our environment and ensure the sustainable management of natural resources.
• Plan and provide settlements that reduce the ecological footprint and enhance quality of life.
• Support communities to fully participate in achieving a sustainable future.
• Assist business to benefit from and contribute to sustainability. (Government of Western Australia, 2003, 33)

The State Sustainability Strategy specifies seven foundation principles, which are:
• Long term economic health
• Equity and human rights
• Biodiversity and ecological integrity
• Settlement efficiency and quality of life
• Community, regions, ‘sense of place’ and heritage
• Net benefit from development
• Common good from planning (Government of Western Australia, 2003, 30, my emphasis)

Note that the term: economic ‘health’ rather than ‘growth’ is used. This is significant in that it provides a cultural understanding of sustainability, and leaves open the possibility of politically organising for sustainability.

The process principles, listed below, are of particular interest to educators because they address economically determinist policies which currently work to orient schools towards the economy (Smyth and Shacklock, 1998, Smyth, 2001).
• Integration of the triple bottom line
• Accountability, transparency and engagement
• Precaution
• Hope, vision, symbolic and iterative change (Government of Western Australia, 2003, 30)

When the triple bottom line is applied in education system accounting, social and environmental outcomes must be as significant as economic ones. Educators could demand either complete abolition of benchmarked literacy and numeracy testing which are considered to be economic outcomes25, or benchmarked outcomes for each of the sustainability pillars (economy, society and environment)26. Likewise, it could be

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25 They are considered to be economic outcomes because they are seen as essential skills for school graduates to take their place in progressing the economic goals of the country through participation in work.
26 There are other combinations of possibilities such as benchmarked literacy and numeracy testing together with collaborative benchmarks for social and environmental outcomes. These might include, for example, whole school audits for environmental
argued that the precautionary principle should be used to abolish benchmarked literacy and numeracy testing because of the danger that the system causes environmental deterioration by orienting the education system away from a sustainable future by preventing socially critical teaching and learning. (I further develop this concern about literacy and numeracy testing to the exclusion of social and environmental indicators later in this chapter, where I develop it as a deep systemic structural contradiction.) Now that the policy has been ratified, considerable research and public participation in policy development and implementation are required.

The Western Australian State Sustainability Strategy reflects a strong ethical approach and is situated further along the continuum towards transformation and government reorientation for a culture of sustainable living than the World Summit for Sustainable Development (WSSD) documents. There are many reasons for optimism in the document. For example, the following clarification on economic development is taken from the section on the meaning of sustainability:

Australia has developed in the context of centuries of debate and criticism about the way in which development has occurred. These include economic opportunities based on slavery, child labour, excessive working hours and dangerous work practices. Australia and the world are now incorporating the ideas of sustainability into decision-making. This means that certain economic opportunities are no longer pursued... Sustainability is not about halting progress but it does demand that we take a deep breath and think again about particular issues. (Government of Western Australia, 2003, 27)

The process used to develop this document is written as follows: sustainability principles ⇒ sustainability visions ⇒ sustainability goals and priority areas.

As indicated by the Australian State of the Environment Report (2001) and by Annan (2002) in the brochure prepared for the Johannesburg Summit, the major task is putting the sustainability policies and commitments into practice. That is, achieving the goals, visions and outcomes of vastly improved social and environmental conditions which are indicated in the policies. Above, I showed that policies underpinned by economic growth as well as social and environmental sustainability contain an oxymoronic structural contradiction which is impossible to resolve. They function to deny limits and act to slow rather than speed ecological improvement. This structural contradiction may improvement and full implementation of appropriate behaviour programs underpinned by principles of peace and non-violence for whole school and community development.
partly explain the lack of progress towards social and environmental goals. However, policies are now moving beyond Fien’s and Trainer’s (1993) growth with equity end of the sustainable development continuum, towards the cultural discourses of sustainability. Annan’s (2002) comments show that policies alone will not make a difference.

2.3.3 Background to the Research: Unsustainability

The Australian government produces a State of the Environment Report every five years, on which basis Australia’s progress towards sustainability indicators can be assessed and appropriate policies devised. The introduction to the key findings in the 2001 report supports the necessity for personal, social, cultural and political change in Australia:

The key to Australia's sustainable future lies in ourselves: our attitudes towards the environment, our heritage and each other. Positive change can be achieved when people see options for improvement in their quality of life and opportunities for their children and grandchildren. This change is accelerated when public awareness is translated into political action that influences the activities of our society to care for our country. (Commonwealth of Australia, 2001)

In the Executive Overview, the report states that very little improvement has happened in the Australian natural environment since 1996, and that it has worsened in some critical aspects.

According to the quotation from the Commonwealth of Australia above, one implication is that public awareness has not been translated into political action. Hill, as Australian Minister for the Environment, said the following while launching the 2001 State of the Environment report:

In so many ways Australia is now a recognised global leader on environmental issues such as ozone, greenhouse, biodiversity, forest management and world heritage. Australia should be proud of what it has achieved to date and confident that it has the capacity, ability and commitment to continue to meet our responsibility to ensure we pass a healthy, vibrant and sustainable environment to future generations. (2001)

According to the very report he was launching, the ESD Strategy and related environmental policies have not been implemented well at all. How can Hill say that Australia is a recognised leader? This demonstrates that policy and commitments are
irrelevant without implementation in practice. The Australian government report to the
Johannesburg WSSD was severely criticised by a list of Australian environmental
NGOs. Christoff (2002) wrote that the Australian government had overstated the
successes and omitted the considerable evidence of severe environmental degradation to
the point of irresponsibility. He claimed that with regard to environmental progress,
Australia was actually a continent in reverse.

In an intense criticism of almost every aspect of the Australian government’s
management of the environment, Christoff, writing for a group of Australian
environmental NGOs, says:

Over the past decade, in ecological terms, Australia has been a continent
in reverse. It is going backwards on nearly every major indicator of our
environmental health… Australia is a laggard state… Since 1996, it has
become a recognised spoiler at negotiations over the implementation of
various environmental regimes, and a combative challenger to the
authority of the United Nations and other agencies for international
governance. The Howard Government has been marked by its
willingness to attempt to destroy some of the world’s most important
international environmental treaties, such as the Climate Change
Convention. It has also strenuously opposed the introduction of
substantial agreements with targets and timetables into the preparatory
negotiations for the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development.
(2002)

The Australian Government’s orientation towards unsustainability is supposedly for
economic reasons. Christoff (2002, 9) notes that Australian governments over the past
two decades have energetically pursued neo-liberal policies with the objective of
increasing Australia’s economic exposure to global markets, with a corresponding
reduction of state ownership of infrastructure, lowered taxes on corporations and
individuals, as well as cutting expenditure and employment. This has affected
environmental policy implementation.

In the Entrepreneur versus the Ecologist image referred to above, the ends of the
continuum of sustainable development are labelled and clear, however the range of
positions in the middle, and in fact the way forward towards sustainability, are highly
contested. It is possible that the Johannesburg World Summit for Sustainable
Development (WSSD) has widened the distance between the ends, rather than
narrowing them, by its official endorsement of increased economic growth. It sees that
the problems of poverty eradication can be addressed through measures underpinned by
sustaining and intensifying economic growth. Some conservation groups have voiced opposition to the process and the outcomes, for example the World Wildlife Fund denounced the WSSD as the “World Summit on Shameful Deals” (WWF, 2002b). They say that the WSSD dramatically failed to take appropriate action to address the models of unsustainable production and consumption that are depleting the planet as well as the people who inhabit it. In addition, some groups are concerned that voluntary partnerships were promoted by some nations as a substitute for government action and commitment (Earth Charter Steering Committee and International Secretariat, 2002, 2).

I will contrast two approaches representing each end of the continuum, which are The World Bank Institute, and the World Conservation Union (IUCN). The World Bank Institute published an article which states:

The Challenge of Sustainable Development

Increased growth will be key: low income countries need to grow at per capita rates of at least 3.6 percent per year if the 29 percent of the world population living on less than $1 a day in 1990 is to be halved by 2015… The payoff will be great: increased growth means decreases in extreme poverty, declines in child malnutrition and progress on many of the other targets… If per capita incomes in low and middle-income countries rise at 3.3 percent per year, this would yield $6300 per capita by 2050. This would imply that basic human needs for shelter, food and clothing could be met and more. Even pessimistic estimates would place life expectancy in poor countries at 72 years…. (Johnson, 2002, 9).

Johnson acknowledges that the size of the challenge should not be underestimated, because economic growth rates in poor countries from 1981 to 2000 was only 1.6 percent and for the challenge to be met, developing countries will need to open up their markets to trade.

At the other end of the sustainable development continuum, the IUCN (nd) orients itself towards sustainable livelihoods and ecosystem management, sustainable finance and governance. They say that the majority of the world’s poor live in rural areas and their livelihoods depend upon natural ecosystems, which are already under increasing pressure from rapacious economic development and environmental degradation (IUCN, 2002b). They make the important points that to this stage, globalisation has increased the rich/poor divide, and that income insufficiency is only one indicator of poverty. Lack of access to, and lack of control of assets upon which livelihoods depend is another indicator and the range of responses should include ecosystem restoration for
poverty alleviation, a business case for biodiversity, sustainable use, and greening the GDP. Their response includes governance, which the IUCN see as “governance for sustainable development”, as a “means to an end” (IUCN, 2002c).

An integral component of governance for sustainable development is the ability to exercise inclusive leadership so that all voices are heard and respected, including those of the poor, so that outcomes will be more equitable. The IUCN supports “structured devolution of authority to the local and community level” (2002c), which must include the capacity to organize, fund and carry out the devolved responsibilities. Capacity for structured devolution governance is essential in order to implement national and international decisions. The difference between the IUCN and the World Bank is the World Bank’s uncritical reliance on deterministic economic growth, which incorporates less governance, at least in the sense that the World Bank sees that there is no other alternative than for developing countries to open up their markets. On the other hand, the IUCN would engage in the local complexities through good governance which has been structurally devolved to include all voices. The World Bank must conform to all international treaties and conventions, and yet it implements policies that favour the wealthy corporations and structurally excludes the possibility of effective and meaningful transformation towards real sustainability.

2.3.4 Towards Sustainability as Process

It is far too simplistic to reduce the sustainability issue to both ends of a continuum, as the polarisation of views is detrimental to the synthesising of innovative ways of moving forward. There are many ways of representing the range of views along the continuum, for example Warren’s (2000, 76 – 91) categories of “the house” (dominant Eurocentric tradition of theorising), reform (assumptions of the house with revised particulars), mixed reform and radical, and radical (which are conceptually revolutionary). I shall briefly illustrate a cultural theory approach which points to a way of working with the views that is exceptionally inclusive. Schwarz and Thompson (1990, 1-13) show that clear separation between social choice, politics and technology is impossible, because they are an entangled, inchoate mass in which complexity is the essence. Simplicity of the complexity is impossible because it really means distancing
from the problem. The problem is one of irresolvably contradictory cognitive certainties.

Social choice, politics and technology are entangled because they all rely in crucial ways on cognition: ways of seeing and knowing. Accordingly, Schwarz and Thompson have mapped four different rationalities which each view environmental problems and their resolution differently. The rationalities are represented in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rationality Type:</th>
<th>The Fatalist</th>
<th>The Hierarchist</th>
<th>The Individualist</th>
<th>The Egalitarian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rationality Description:</td>
<td>Fatalism: ‘It doesn’t matter who you vote for…’</td>
<td>Procedural ‘A place for everything’</td>
<td>Substantive ‘The bottom line’</td>
<td>Critical ‘Tread lightly on the earth’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>View of Nature:</td>
<td>Capricious</td>
<td>Perverse/tolerant</td>
<td>Benign</td>
<td>Ephemeral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>View of Choice:</td>
<td>Externally imposed choice restrictions</td>
<td>Externally imposed choice restrictions</td>
<td>No externally imposed choice restrictions</td>
<td>No externally imposed choice restrictions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group Orientation:</td>
<td>Individualised</td>
<td>Collectivised</td>
<td>Individualised</td>
<td>Collectivised</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Myths of Nature Mapped onto the Rationalities, as the basis of the political cultures model of decision-making, from Schwarz and Thompson, 1990

The concern should not be with the rationality that is right, instead it should be deciding which one is appropriate to the particular situation. This view facilitates the acceptance of contradiction, diversity and contention as tools for a synthesis, arriving at the position: “divided we stand”. The strength of this approach is its massive inclusivity through plurality which respects and upholds difference. With inclusion of a plurality of biases through plural political cultures, the process of decision-making constructs the organisational culture (Schwarz and Thompson, 1990, 65). This idea goes some way towards addressing the problem referred to by Fien and Tilbury (2002, 3) of polarised.

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27 In chapter four, I illustrated cognition as integral to a participative epistemology. Cognition, according to Capra (1997, 260) is the process of life: the process of “bringing forth a world” through the act of living and creating.

28 This is the main part of the title of their book.
positions which miss the essential point of the necessity for change and compromise.

UNESCO sees sustainability as a process of change in relationships between economic, social and natural processes and systems. It is an evolving concept, an ethical precept and emerging vision, involving the dynamic balance of many factors including cultural, social and economic requirements of humanity (1997a, 15, 16). Active involvement at the local level is one of the action strategies put forward. Many international agreements, such as Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration (UNEP, 1992b), support a strengthening of the concept of just participation in decision-making by the people concerned by the decision. For example, in a bid to strengthen democratic public participation in decisions relating to the environment, the Aarhus Convention of 1998 was signed by the nations of the United Nations Economic Commission of Europe, resulting in a notion of environmental citizenship (UNECE, 2001).

Clover (2002, 177) writes that there most likely cannot be an all encompassing definition of sustainability, because every community’s contexts and requirements will be different. Sustainability calls for “comprehensive change in the way society operates” (UNESCO, 1997a, 35). UNESCO has developed ethical principles for sustainability, including the ethic of time (corrective action before it is too late; anticipate and prevent), complexity as an ethical issue (simplification of complex issues is fraudulent and misrepresentative of reality), and continuity (the ethical link between past, present and future). The third ethic means living up to responsibility to future generations by meeting the needs of today without compromising those of the future and without forgetting the lessons of history (UNESCO, 1997b). Sustainability is a moral imperative, an emerging concept and vision which constantly requires new learning and new kinds of knowledge from which to view the interrelated complexities. An implication is that as radicals, by our own criteria we do not have the high moral ground. We all need transformative learning – starting with ourselves. We all need to learn to see, hear and experience in new, more sensible ways. For me, this is a very humbling, grounding awareness.

Schwarz and Thompson provide little direction on the decision-making processes, however (other than the application of the model to technology assessment). The model is of particular use for policy development and analysis.
**Chapter Summary**

In this chapter, I used a narrative inquiry process to link my own life story to radical ecology and sustainability interests in Western Australia. I showed that for me, growing up close to nature involved a deep awareness of, and connection with ecology. Working with Aboriginal people enabled me to see the significance of relationships of care of each other and nature, through which I understand the ecofeminist perspective. Confrontation with power-over approaches to economic development enabled me to understand the significance of participative decision-making processes of ecological democracy. Following this, I reviewed the radical ecology debates to show that controlling, power-over approaches to knowledge had reduced the autonomy of each position, in effect arguing away important pieces of wisdom about the depth of human-nature interbeing.

Seeing radical ecology as the union rather than the intersection of its positions, which is an outcome of a dialogical, participative, empathetic process approach to knowledge such as that used by Abram (1996), enables the holism and wisdom of radical ecology to be preserved. This is important because as Clover (2002) points out, there is not one way to sustainability or one definition of sustainability since all contexts are unique. Accordingly seeing sustainability as a concept with dissonance at its core enables development of a dynamic process-oriented locally based transformative approach to problems of unsustainability (Wals and Jickling, 2002; Scott, 2002; Orr, 2002).

UNESCO (1997, 2002) suggests four pillars of sustainability: the biophysical, social and cultural, economic and the political. In recent literature, the radical writers (such as Orr 2002, Fien 2001 and Sterling 2001) uphold the value of the political pillar as the organising principle for generating decisions to enable social and cultural renewal, resulting in sustainable ways to care for and live from the biophysical base of the planet. Fundamental to the political pillar is the rich concept of participation.

The political process approach contrasts with the economically determinist approaches to unsustainability, which hold that the economy will find solutions to sustainability problems. I indicated strengths in Western Australia’s recently launched State Sustainability Strategy, which are firstly that it is underpinned by economic health

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30 Annan, UN secretary general, writes that the Aarhus Convention is “regional in scope, but global in significance”. (UNECE,
rather than economic growth and secondly that it has a principled, process-oriented approach to the development of action plans. Sadly, the educational drivers for the process approach to sustainable development are missing from the Australian and Western Australian policies. The Sustainable Development Education Panel (1998a, 4) in the UK identify definitions which see the process for development towards sustainability as being about learning, in particular life-long learning. Together with the IUCN (2002a, 2002c), Scott (2002, 2) and Sterling (2001) they see the process of sustainable development as a learning process for cultural transformation towards a sustainable, liveable future. Education is not included in the process or principles section in the Western Australian State Sustainability Strategy.

As I see the sustainability quest, policies, strategies and action plans each need to have embedded learning as drivers for social transformation. This addresses the gap identified by Annan (2002) when he indicated that commitment is not enough because the sustainability policies have not been adequately implemented in practice. People need to learn how, before they can act. I shall now turn to education, and review the field of education for sustainability (EfS) before reviewing relevant political developments in education in Australia and Western Australia in chapter four.
CHAPTER THREE - LEARNING SUSTAINABILITY

Essentially, radical ecologists ask how people and in particular people of the north should live, so that there will be the possibility of a sustainable, liveable future for all inhabitants of the planet. In this chapter I put forward education for sustainability (EfS) as the educational framework for the dissertation, because of its academic and practical work on transformation towards a sustainable, liveable future. In chapter two, I showed that the meaning and character of sustainable development and sustainability is the subject of important, ongoing debates. Hence, the field of EfS is one of ongoing tension within and contest between perspectives, representing a huge variety of interests and complexities. There are three sections in this chapter, the first of which is an introduction to EfS through international policies, examples and problems. The second section introduces some academic issues and current debates, while the third section reviews the idea of learning sustainability as a way forward.

3.1 Education for Sustainability

The history of EfS is generally traced through environmental education; however it is more easily understood as a confluence of various streams of educational thought. EfS is described by Fien as follows:

Education for sustainability involves approaches to teaching and learning that integrate goals for conservation, social justice, appropriate development and democracy into a vision and a mission of personal and social change. It seeks to develop the kinds of civic virtues and skills that can empower all citizens and, through them our social institutions, to play leading roles in the transition to sustainability. As such, education for sustainability encompasses a vision for society that is not only ecologically sustainable but one which is socially, economically and politically sustainable as well. (2001, 1)

The strength of Fien's description is its acknowledgment of political sustainability together with its rich incorporation of citizenship as agent for social and personal transformation. Current, generally understood definitions of environmental education often connote ecological sustainability only, rather than the fuller radical ecology understanding of sustainability/sustainable development in their definitions, pointing to a difference in emphasis between EfS and environmental education. For example the
National Action Plan for environmental education, called: *Environmental Education for a Sustainable Future*, defines environmental education as follows:

Raising awareness, acquiring new perspectives, values, knowledge and skills, and formal and informal processes leading to changed behaviour in support of an ecologically sustainable environment (Commonwealth of Australia, 2000, 3).

Fien (1997) argues that environmental education is very much more than just the three assumptions that have been uncritically accepted for too long, which are nature study, direct experience of nature and generating responsible environmental behaviour in individuals. He says that these aspects are necessary but not sufficient. Paden emphasises the distinction as:

[environmental education views the environment] *within the context of* human influences, incorporating an examination of economics, culture, political structure and social equity… [whereas education for sustainability emphasises] that environment, equity and economics be considered as a whole and its values involve promoting all three together. (2000a, 8, emphasis given)

In this dissertation, my use of the terms: ‘environmental education’ and ‘education for sustainability’ (EfS) refer to the meanings provided here. It is now becoming recognised that environmental education is an important element of the wider concept of education for sustainable development (for example, Hesselink, 2000, 6, 7). I shall return to the problem of the name shortly.

### 3.1.1 International Policies and Agreements

There was a long history of nature studies before the politically-induced ‘environmental education’ came into being in response to recognition of the environmental crisis. For example, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation claims that it first offered nature-based educational programs in 1935 (nd.). However, as observed by the Global Development Research Centre (GDRC) (2002a) environmental education has been here as long as people have. People have always lived symbiotically with nature, weaving religion, stories and culture into the sense of place. Fien (2001, 3) comments that in Australia, this education is 40,000 years old.

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31 Having stated that, it should be understood that sometimes writers I have quoted, particularly those before about 1997, use the term ‘environmental education’ when their comments would apply equally to EfS and they may in fact be referring to the fuller, radical ecology understanding of EfS.

32 Historically EfS is generally regarded as having developed from environmental education (eg. von Bieberstein Koch-Weser 2000, vii).
Tilbury (1997, 106) states that the term ‘environmental education’ was first used in Paris in 1948 at a meeting of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (now the IUCN). Hesselink and Goldstein (2000, 123) state that the IUCN was set up in 1948 and was involved in educating about the environment from the beginning. Gough (1997, 2) writes that the works of such writers as Carson, Erlich and Commoner in the 1960s caused the popular recognition of large scale environmental problems, which led to the UN Declaration on the Human Environment in 1972. According to their website, the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) began in the early 1960s, to promote the causes of conservation through education33 (WWF, 2002a). The first issue of the Journal of Environmental Education was published in 1969 (Gough, 1997, 4).

UNESCO has played a key role in the development and promotion of environmental education, beginning with the charter resulting from the Belgrade Conference in 1975 and the declaration resulting from the Tbilisi, Georgia Conference in 1977. The Tbilisi Conference facilitated general recognition of the political nature of environmental education and according to Gough (1997, 21) formalised environmental education. The first point of the Tbilisi Declaration is:

Whereas it is a fact that biological and physical features constitute the natural basis of the human environment, it’s ethical, social, cultural, and economic dimensions also play their part in determining the lines of approach and the instruments whereby people may understand and make better use of natural resources in satisfying their needs (GDRC, 2002b).

This declaration devised five groups of objectives, which are: awareness, knowledge, attitudes, skills and participation. The participation group of objectives are presented as:

**Participation**—to provide social groups and individuals with an opportunity to be actively involved at all levels in working toward resolution of environmental problems (GDRC, 2002).

At that stage, environmental education had been seen as largely the responsibility of the science educators. The result of these recommendations that advocated a socially critical approach as well as social change seems to have been considerable confusion, because science educators saw the problems as problems of ecology, rather than society (Gough, 1997, 27). Further, reports from both the Belgrade and the Tbilisi Conferences acknowledged the inadequacies of the individual academic disciplines (Gough, 2002,

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33 Hesselink and Goldstein (2000, 124) indicate that the WWF was originally set up to raise funds for the IUCN.
Although EfS grew from environmental education, the Tbilisi conference seems to have articulated the curriculum gap between society and environment.

There have been a large variety of UNESCO environmental education conferences, which have each played a part in shaping the socially critical nature of EfS. These include Belgrade 1975, Tbilisi 1977, Jomtien 1990, Toronto 1992, Thessaloniki 1997 and Dakar 2000. UN Environment and Development conferences have also had large impacts on EfS, including WCED 1987, Rio 1992, Cairo (population) 1994, Copenhagen (social development) 1995, Beijing (women) 1995 and Istanbul (human settlements) 1996. Outcomes of these conferences were generally reaffirmed at WSSD Johannesburg (2002), and the NGOs and UNESCO (2002c) noted the lack of progress towards EfS and sustainability goals.

UNESCO (2001a) writes that current planetary ecological and human crises are not in themselves the causes of the problems, rather they are symptoms which are the consequences of: “thinking, values and practices in social, economic and political affairs that have put the world on an unsustainable path”. Therefore they indicate that education is even more essential than dealing with the problems, so that the interrelations between the problems can be revealed in order to develop new human perspectives, which are embedded in the values of sustainability. In short, UNESCO underlines that education and sustainability come together. UNESCO has developed the concept of ‘Educating for a Sustainable Future’ (UNESCO, 1997a, 2002a, 2001a). A volume of policies and declarations resulting from each conference supports UNESCO’s approach.

Since Tbilisi, Agenda 21, which resulted from the UNCED in Rio De Janiero in 1992, has had the biggest impact on environmental education and sustainability education theories and policies. This is because of its recommendation to reorient schooling, which has been reaffirmed by each subsequent sustainability-related conference. Agenda 21, chapter 36 is devoted to education, public awareness and training and is written against three program areas, which are: reorienting education towards sustainable development, increasing public awareness and promoting training. It specifies that:

…environment and development education should deal with the dynamics of both the physical/biological and socio-economic
environment and human (which may include spiritual) development, should be integrated in all disciplines, and should employ formal and non-formal methods and effective means of communication. (UNEP, 1992a, chapter 36.3)

Further:

Governments should strive to update or prepare strategies aimed at integrating environment and development as a cross-cutting issue into education at all levels within the next three years. This should be done in cooperation with all sectors of society. The strategies should set out policies and activities, and identify needs, cost, means and schedules for their implementation, evaluation and review. A thorough review of curricula should be undertaken to ensure a multidisciplinary approach, with environment and development issues and their socio-cultural and demographic aspects and linkages. Due respect should be given to community-defined needs and diverse knowledge systems, including science, cultural and social sensitivities. (UNEP, 1992a, Chapter 36.5b)

UNEP (1992a) implored governments to implement thorough reviews of all aspects and all levels of education, to ensure that a reorientation towards sustainability occurs.

Soon after UNCED, the World Congress for Education and Communication on Environment and Development was held in Toronto (1992) for the purpose of attending to Agenda 21 recommendations. Sustainable development at that time was conceived in economic terms, and the conference made some progress on beginning to develop the emerging concept of EfS. Notions such as population, environmental degradation, interdependence, poverty, democracy, human rights and peace were beginning to be integrated (UNESCO, 2001a). The International Conference on Environment and Society: Education and Public Awareness for Sustainability (Thessaloniki) was five years after the Toronto conference and UNCED; therefore it took place in the context of a new vision of education. The Thessaloniki Declaration reaffirms education as one of the pillars of sustainability, and makes a series of recommendations including environmental education/EfS action plans for national and local levels. It recommends that governments give the highest possible priority in terms of funding and support for schools and other education institutions including teacher education programs as well as NGOs, to reorient towards a sustainable future. It also recommends media involvement in the transformation effort (1997c, item 20).

The Dakar Framework for Action, resulting from the World Education Forum in 2000, further raises the significance of education to a sustainable future, as follows:
"Education is [...] the key to sustainable development and peace and stability within and among countries, and thus an indispensable means for effective participation in the societies and economies of the twenty-first century" (UNESCO, 2001a).

It reaffirms the socially transformative vision for education articulated in the *World Declaration on Education for All* resulting from Jomtien, Thailand in 1990, because “tragically, reality has fallen far short of this vision” (UNESCO, 2001b). The outcome of the Dakar forum is a framework summarised in six major goals and twelve strategies, detailed in *Education for All: Meeting Our Collective Commitments* (EFA) and focusing on equity of educational outcomes across frontiers caused by gender, class, geographic region, ethnicity and age (ibid.).

*Structural and Curriculum Reforms*

The structural reforms called for by UNESCO include new ways of assessment and reporting of processes and outcomes of learning as well as localised decision-making. The education curricular reforms which are called for by UNESCO (1997a) include the placement of a notion of citizenship as a primary objective, since EfS is a contribution towards the development of a politically literate society. A balanced approach, which attends to the political and economic causes of poverty and injustice, is essential since these conditions foster unsustainability. UNESCO call for learning about ecological processes in association with market forces, equitable decision-making, cultural values, government actions (and inactions) as well as the interdependencies of environmental impacts and human activities. Finally, critical reflection on students’ place in the world and the envisioning and development of more sustainable lifeways is required. These elements are skills and abilities of good citizenship, which illustrate EfS as part of the process towards the development of an informed, active and concerned politically literate populace (UNESCO, 1997a, 26, 27).

Fien (2001, 15) recommends further reforms in the Australian context, including learning how to learn, moral virtues and ethical discernment, creativity as well as the motivation and ability to collaborate with others to build a sustainable future. Huckle (2000a, 5) provides similar curriculum reform advice, presented as learning outcomes in the categories of knowledge, skills and values. Orr (1992, 133 – 140) includes a syllabus for ecological literacy and is also specific about the manner in which education
is to occur. UNESCO’s notion of educating for a sustainable future allows for the development of the political component of sustainable development referred to by Orr (1992, 75) and Huckle (1996, 9, 10). UNESCO puts forward objectives to include in the development of a strategic vision of education for sustainable development:

- Encouraging respect for ethics and values – the principal vector for promoting a viable future, as well as for fair and just societies.
- Promoting a true 'international democracy of knowledge' that will at the same time strengthen the richness and diversity of existing cultures.
- Fostering research, experimentation and innovation in ways that will fully contribute to the quest for a viable future.
- Bridging the gap between science and education for sustainable development.
- Reorienting the education system so that it takes account of today's complex realities – including globalization, interdisciplinary synergy and the possibilities created by new technologies.
- Strengthening regional-national cooperation efforts. (UNESCO, 2001a)

UNESCO is compelling in its assertion that education is the major pathway towards sustainability. For example:

The goal of education is to make people wiser, more knowledgeable, better informed, ethical, responsible, critical and capable of continuing to learn. Were all people to possess such abilities and qualities, the world’s problems would not be automatically solved, but the means and the will to address them would be at hand. Education also serves society by providing a critical reflection on the world, especially its failings and injustices, and by promoting greater consciousness and awareness, exploring new visions and concepts, and inventing new techniques and tools. Education is also the means for disseminating knowledge and developing skills, for bringing about desired changes in behaviours, values and lifestyles, and for promoting public support for the continuing and fundamental changes that will be required. Education is humanity’s best hope and most effective means in the quest to achieve sustainable development. (2001a)

They state that the reorienting of education is fundamental for human well-being and happiness as well as survival. Further, education needs to be life-long (ibid.).

### 3.1.2 International Examples of EFS/Sustainability Policies and Actions

"An Agenda 21 for the Baltic Sea Region" exemplifies a cooperative international commitment to education for sustainable development. The Heads of Government of the Baltic Sea Region, which comprises Finland, Germany, Iceland, Denmark, Estonia,
Lithuania, Norway, Latvia, Poland, the Russian Federation and Sweden, framed a series of cooperative values and principles for the development of an Agenda 21 commitment in May 1996. The report with an action plan for carrying out Agenda 21 for the Education Sector in the Baltic Sea Region was accepted by the Ministers for Education in January, 2002. The agreement for the overall goal of education is as follows:

All individuals should have competence to support a sustainable development that meets the needs of the present without compromising on the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Education for sustainable development should be based on an integrated approach to economic, societal and environmental development. (Baltic 21E, 2002)

The Baltic21E goal for schools is:

The individual learner should have the knowledge, values and skills to be active, democratic and responsible citizens and to participate in decisions in individual as well as different levels of society, locally and globally, to contribute to developing a sustainable society. (Baltic 21E, 2002)

Baltic 21E, 2002 states: “Ultimately, [the sub-goals or criteria] are to guide the selection of proposed actions and contribute to transforming and making BSR [Baltic Sea Region] sustainable.”

Part of the Baltic Sea Region’s Agenda 21 for the Education Sector, Swedish schools are committed to reorientation towards sustainability. As such, they are encouraged to demonstrate collaboration between staff and students so that emphasis is placed on creating an ecologically sustainable society. The Swedish EPA says:

An ecologically sustainable Sweden by 2020: We are resolved to hand down an ecologically sustainable society to future generations, a society in which the major environmental problems have been solved, with a flourishing natural and cultural environment (2002).

Green School Awards are issued to schools by the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency when they satisfy given sustainability criteria.

Writing about the progress towards education for sustainable development in Europe, Hesselink (2000, 3) comments that whilst there are a variety of approaches being taken in the different member states of the European Union, there is an emerging trend to speak about learning rather than education, which covers a broader range of initiatives than what is traditionally seen as education. “Learning towards sustainability” and a transformation from ‘convincing’ to ‘dialogue’ are reported (Hesselink, 2000, 8). There is also a trend for governments to see education for sustainable development
instrumentally, as a tool to bring about changes towards sustainability. He reports that in the Netherlands, a policy called “Environmental Education 21” has three interlinked areas of activities, which are: basic ecological education, learning for liveability and learning for sustainability. These areas of activity are based on the premise that no one has the answers, and that a dialogical approach to jointly consider interests, opinions, values and norms will find suitable ways forward. He cites O’Riordan and Voisey:

The transition is as much about new ways of knowing, of being differently human in a threatened but cooperating world, as it is about management and innovation of procedures and products (Hesselink, 2000, 8).

3.1.3 Failures of Implementation

There is international concern that many governments are doing insufficient to promote environmental education or education for sustainable development in their nation states. At the World Summit for Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, a statement organised by the World Conservation Union, signed by representatives of national and regional professional environmental education associations was read to the meeting. The main message is:

Although education is acknowledged as crucial to sustainability issues in a number of UN documents (e.g. Agenda 21) and multilateral environmental agreements (Biodiversity; Climate Change), participants agreed that it has been widely ignored by governments in the 10 years since the Earth Summit (IUCN, 2002a).

The members called for a significant raising of the profile of environmental education and public awareness in order to build a just and sustainable global society. They called for education for sustainable development implementation plans. They announced that they support the Earth Charter as the ethical framework and the proposal for a Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (IUCN, 2002a). Likewise Smyth J.C. (2002) indicates some improvement in the context, such as talking about learning rather than education, but he expresses strong concern over its continuing low profile. He writes that UNESCO has reported to the UN Commission on Sustainable Development that “education is the forgotten priority of Rio” (Smyth, J.C. 2002). He states that the result of the continuing low profile is that:

There has been no real evidence of any widespread change in formal learning relating to sustainability, nor of much improvement in public
understanding of it, and certainly no great increase in the allocation of resources for the revision of professional practice in this direction (ibid.).

Smyth, J.C. (2002) writes that EfS progress has been made in the areas of national strategies for environmental education or education for sustainable development; international conferences such as Toronto, New Delhi and Thessalonika; some kind of consensus has been reached as to what EfS is about “compared to its predecessor, environmental education”; and many successful projects which practice environmental education or EfS are in existence. However, Smyth, J.C. (2002) supplies a list of issues which need more attention. Many people, especially those uninvolved, still see it as an education subject rather than a central structure of education which is emerging as a way of thinking, or as a permeating quality like social or personal competence.

Many social educators are very sensitive about education policies which they see as too environmentally biased, while wildlife and landscape conservation educators are anxious about what they see as a socio-economic take over of sustainability. He says that as long as different interests compete and defend their own territories and positions, forming them into a single system will be delayed. Human lifestyle interdependence on natural and social processes does not tend to be recognised by society as a whole, but some socio-economic aspects are seen to have greater political appeal and so tend to be better funded, leaving the environment spectrum behind and causing specialists such as peace educators or biodiversity educators to return to their specialisms, which EfS was intended to counteract. Administrators still seem to see education as a servant of the economy, for improving citizen’s employability only, leaving less formal learning channels unconsidered.

Smyth, J.C. (2002) reports on other, more political issues as well. Firstly, there is not yet a critical mass of supporters for sustainability/environmental education, so there remains insufficient potential to raise political pressure for the cause. Secondly, education in the UN’s Commission on Sustainable Development was not set up with the backing of a powerful, international NGO, compared to the nine existing other interests represented. Consequently, the education group’s interests are not expressed as effectively as other interests. Thirdly, ministries of education with many other problems to contend with such as low teacher morale, low funding and other vociferous pressure
groups, are generally not likely to give a high priority to EfS or environmental education.

Finally, Smyth, J.C. (2002) indicates that there are often serious practical problems for teachers, for example their enthusiasm, extra work and glowing project outcomes are often not enough to attract funding to ensure project continuity. He is also concerned with realities such as their lack of training or timetabled capacity to participate in cross-curricular activities. Writers including UNESCO (2002b, 20), Cosgrove, Evans and Yencken (1994, 80) and Booth and Rodgers (2000) describe similar problems in the fields of education, environmental research and natural resource management respectively, suggesting that interdisciplinarity is something that is widely acclaimed but little is being done to bring it about. Most seriously, Sterling (2001, p. 27, 77) writes that generally, the goal of reorientation of education systems towards sustainable development remains a serious challenge.

Many writers over the years including Hopkins (1991), Fien (1993) and Gough (1997) have explained the practical problems for teachers in implementing EfS and critical environmental education. There are a range of basic problems such as lack of environmental education training, lack of locally-relevant curricula and frameworks as well as mistrust between business, government and educators (Hopkins, 1991). Fien (1993, 78-81) suggests that the debate in sociology between individualistic and structural explanations for human action may assist with the explanation for the rhetoric-reality gap. He refers to researchers who accept structural determinants of education and those who argue that education has the potential to function as a vehicle for social change, suggesting the two languages frame the difference between education as reproduction of society and education as possibility for transformation of society. He problematises the language of critique and reproduction since its deterministic conclusions disempower teachers and casts them as having little scope for social transformation and paradoxically, the discourse further disempowers teachers (1993, 83). Rather, he recommends the language of critique and possibility, which sees teachers as having a positive role to play in social transformation.

Fien suggests teacher professional and practical theories as a key to teacher empowerment for transformation, through a dialectical view of the role of structure and
agency as the basis of a theory of social action (1993, 88). Accordingly, the balance between structural power and human agency is the source of cultural struggle, with transformation and/or reproduction being the socially constructed outcome (ibid. 89-95). Thus according to Fien (1993, 95) the challenge for transformative sustainability educators is to form a critical praxis underpinned by curriculum theorising in the practice of critical pedagogy which is grounded dialectically in critical theorising.

There are strong implications for governments to take EfS very much more seriously. Schools need support to organise curriculum and structures differently so that sustainability education can be put to centre stage. Pre-service and in-service teacher education remains seriously problematic and needs to be reoriented towards EfS. In recent years Australian and Western Australian governments have attended to the development of environmental education policies, strategy statements and action plans, through which some of these issues receive some attention. However in some cases these are seriously short of what is required, as I shall show in the next chapter.

### 3.2 Some Academic Issues in Education for Sustainability

#### 3.2.1 The Name

Fien (1997) argues that the curriculum focus for environmental education should comprise two foci, which are people and nature (which he refers to as ecological sustainability) and people and people (which he refers to as social justice). The ecological sustainability category would incorporate interdependence, biodiversity, living lightly on the earth and interspecies equity. The social justice category would include basic human needs, intergenerational equity, human rights and participation. Largely, approaches which emphasise the ecological sustainability category are now seen as environmental education, whilst approaches which combine the two foci are EfS (or similar), for example Fien (2001, 1) and Tilbury (1997, 105). This apparent simplicity hides a great number of complexities, however. I shall explain.

Tilbury (1997, 106) writes that the term: ‘environmental education’ has at times been synonymous with outdoor education, conservation education, urban studies, environmental studies, as well as a variety of education activities which consider the
environment with educational aims in mind. Gough (1997) comments that she does not mind what the field is called, but “…there is a need for an environmental education of some kind: I have a passion to work for a more socially just world” (1997, 170). In her book she clearly links social justice with environmental education and urges a socially critical environmental education, but says that she is not impressed with titles such as education for sustainable development or EfS either. She says she regards labels as quite meaningless, but argues that much of what has been written about environmental education is of great relevance, for example that environmental education is a curriculum orientation. She says that if it involves a more holistic view, is relevant to everything that goes on in schools, does not separate knowledge into different disciplines and encourages action, then it is relevant (1997, 169). She sidestepped the problem by calling her book: Education and the environment. UNESCO noted that the terms ‘environmental education’ and ‘education for sustainability’ had been used interchangeably for the field referred to by the Tbilisi recommendations. Consequently, they suggested the name: “education for the environment and sustainability” (1997c, item 11).

Some light on the problem of a name for the field of education which pertains to sustainability with environmental education beginnings can be gained from a reading of Greig, Pike and Selby (1987). They describe the narrow and broad definitions of development education, environmental education, human rights education and peace education and ask that at the broad definitions of each, is this really one education or is it still four educations? They argue that there is such a high level of convergence between the four educations at their broad focus that it is difficult to conceive of them as discrete fields, because:

1. Those working at the broad focus have come to recognize that their respective principal concepts – development, environment, human rights and peace – are complementary, interdependent and mutually illuminating.

2. The thinking of those at the broad focus of each field is increasingly marked by a shift away from a compartmentalised view of reality to an acceptance of the interconnectedness of all things and what has been called the ‘permeability of boundaries’.

3. The broad focus position within each of the four ‘educations’ involves fostering the attitudes and practising the skills necessary for active participation in the political process. Such attitudes and skills
are empowering and vital if students are to become subjects rather than objects in their own history. (Greig, Pike and Selby, 1987, 30-36)

They write that for these reasons education should be holistic, lifelong and participatory, with great emphasis on the creation of a humane, open and democratic classroom which would be marked by high levels of cooperation, group and self esteem, negotiation, debate and discussion. They suggest seeing the four ‘educations’ as a holographic model, where each part contains the code of the whole. Further, they suggest a person/planet paradigm with two interplaying realities, the inner life and the outer life. The outer life comprises relations between the personal/local, regional/national, and the wider world whilst the inner life comprises the personal. The education resulting would have four groups of curriculum aims, which they entitle systems, perspectives, conditions and actions. Unfortunately, other than ‘Earthrights’, they do not suggest a name!

There seems to be four essential positions on the environmental education or EfS name debate. Tilbury, Posche, Huckle and Wheeler each described their positions for The ESDebate (Hesselink et al. 2000, 12, 13). Tilbury explains that education for sustainable development differs significantly from the apolitical, naturalist work that was implemented in the 1980s and 1990s; however environmental education is now examining the links between the political threads which link socio-economics and ecology. From Tilbury’s perspective then, environmental education is filling the gap between the ends of the continuum. After an analysis of national and international documents, Tilbury (1997, 107) describes this phenomenon as ‘environmental education for sustainability’. Posche understands the dilemma as education for sustainable development providing an orientation to environmental education. On the other hand, Huckle explains that education for sustainable development has strong links to social, political and development education and is critical and democratic, while environmental education [remains] uncritical and apolitical. Finally, Wheeler sees environmental education as a component of education for sustainable development.

These four positions, which are environmental education as part of EfS or the reverse, and EfS as overlapping environmental education or EfS as a stage in the evolution of environmental education, represent considerable debate. Tracing the history of environmental education into EfS as if it was a relatively smooth progression hides
complexity and contradiction in the problem of unsustainability and the range of solutions. There remain a great variety of perspectives, experiences, values, worldviews, as well as ontological and epistemological positions that are involved. There are broad foci and narrow foci, holistic and specific views, as well as local, regional and global applications. Reductionist, apparent simplicity is unhelpful because socially critical approaches engage with complexity. Hesselink et al. comment that overall, most participants in the extended debate regard education for sustainable development as the next stage in the evolution of environmental education (2000, 12). This seems to be a reasonable way through the dilemma because it enables the maintenance of complexity. Hesselink reports trends in the transformation from environmental education towards education for sustainable development as follows:

- From environment towards society at large
- From nature to sustainability (contents)
- From pupils to adults in all sectors (target groups)
- From teaching to learning (dimensions)
- From vertical to horizontal (communication methods) (Hesselink, 2000, 9)

Posche (2000, 13) writes that the problem with the term ‘education for sustainable development’ is that it legitimises economic growth, which is the implicit understanding in the business-as-usual orientation towards sustainable development. In his article: “Why I don’t want my children educated for sustainable development”, Jickling writes that an impediment to the development of environmental education has been the lack of attention to educational philosophers’ research methods and to educational philosophy itself. This has led firstly, to a vague, uncritical, uncontested version of sustainable development and secondly, to a conceptual muddle called: education for sustainable development. He says that combined with an uncritical acceptance of the term: ‘education’, education for sustainable development suggests: “…an activity like training or the preparation for the achievement of some instrumental aim” (Jickling, 1992, 7). He advocates an understanding of education as “the enabling [of] people to think for themselves” (ibid.). He says that education for sustainable development, deep ecology or anything else suggests a mode of thinking which is predetermined, to which children are expected to prescribe. The very spirit of education is disputed in this case. Jickling adds:
...it breathes a kind of intellectual exclusivity and determinism that conflicts with ideas of emancipation, local knowledge, democracy and self-determination. The prepositional use of ‘for’ prescribes that education must be in favour of some specific and undisputed product, in this case sustainability. (2002, 222)

These are logical sound arguments, which apply to cases such as McKeown, who in discussing the terms: education about sustainable development and education for sustainable development, writes:

The first is an awareness lesson or theoretical discussion. The second is the use of education as a tool to achieve sustainability. (2002, 7)

This narrow, utilitarian view of education ignores the intrinsic, individual learning needs of the children. However, Jickling’s critique is not generally valid because internationally significant curriculum references such as UNESCO (1997 and 2002a) highlight the significance of a democratic, critical praxis of Efs, which is the antithesis of deterministic, transmissive education. Nonetheless, the term ‘Education for sustainable development’ is problematic in that the function of a title is to be descriptive or educative. In this case, it does not comment upon the dimension of education as self-actualisation.

On the other hand, the problem of education for the environment, or for sustainability, has considerable history. The alternative positions are education about, from or as (the environment/sustainability). Using work from Huckle (1983 and later works), Gough writes that:

Education about the environment reflects conventional environmentalism and liberal educational ideology, education from the environment reflects the idealism which underlies both utopian environmentalism and progressive education, and education for the environment combines radical environmentalism and education which regards environmental well-being as its goal (1997, 24).

The issue here is the nature of a socially critical approach to environmental education versus the function of education as an agency for cultural and economic reproduction (Fien, 1993, 7). Gough (ibid.) comments that writers who situate environmental education within the socially critical traditions of education share the view of environments as socially constructed34, as well as the need for social critique and

34 While Huckle (1996, 3), Gough (1997, 24) and others share the view of environments as socially constructed, in recent years there have been very important questions raised by socially critical educators about the problems created by this view, for example Orr (2002, 195).
reconstruction. My understanding of Jickling’s work is that he situates himself deeply within the socially critical tradition, and suggests that we think long and hard about the nature of education itself. What is it and what is its purpose? If education is teaching to transgress, to agitate the comfortable and question the obvious to enable change, we need to consider deeply the philosophy, ethics, politics and justice of education and of environmental education itself (Jickling, 2000, 33). In this case, education for anything is not a good name for the field, and neither is education about. This is because it is simply – ‘education’.

Sterling (2000, 41) thinks of education as sustainability. He comments that the EfS group itself has been in an extended process of learning, shifting from a behaviourist to a constructivist and empowerment model. My understanding of his approach is that the learning is itself sustaining and connective. He indicates that we should investigate more closely what connects education, learning and sustainability in order to deeply challenge the dominant economic development model of education. He writes that the problem is one of language. Sterling, writing for The ESDebate about the terminology of the field, says that:

> It may be that we come up with a more adequate concept in the future which might more adequately represent and convey our thinking at that time. But let’s not abandon ESD[^35] just yet – it still has work to do! (2000, 52)

The following year Sterling (2001) published a book, which calls for a radical re-visioning and reorienting of education of westerners towards sustainability. He abandoned ESD and named his book after the education he calls ‘sustainable education’!

Unfortunately, even ‘sustainable education’ may not solve the naming problems. In July 2002 the Australian government announced funding to develop trials of a sustainable schools program, however a reading of the article on the Environment Australia website suggests that it is an environment-only interpretation of sustainability (although it deals indirectly with consumption through recycling and reducing power and water use):

> The defining feature of the Sustainable Schools program is the integration of existing and fragmented approaches to environmental education into a holistic education program. Sustainable schools target

[^35]: ESD stands for Education for Sustainable Development in this context. In other contexts, it can also mean Ecologically Sustainable Development.
school curriculums as well as the management practices of school grounds and facilities. The program provides direct benefits to the environment through reductions in waste, water and electricity use, and an increase in local biodiversity. Students learn about environmental issues while implementing practical measures to improve the school environment. Beginning with an audit of the schools current environmental practice in energy and water use, waste management and biodiversity, teachers and students go on to improve their practice in each of these areas. Systems for recycling are established, programs for reducing power and water usage are implemented and projects for increasing biodiversity developed. (Environment Australia, 2002b)

These environment-only initiatives are not necessarily problematic because their error in omitting social justice, socially critical objectives and participatory decision-making may only be an error of omission rather than commission. However, the following passage reveals a contradiction to the essence of EfS:

Sustainable Schools promises to make environmental education and improved environmental practice a daily part of school life, without imposing upon traditional education subject areas (Environment Australia, 2002b, my emphasis).

Therefore at least until challenged, ‘Sustainable schools’ in Australia will accept the uncritical, apolitical environmental education version of sustainability. It will continue the traditional disciplinary separation, and maintain the status quo of business-as-usual as it captures the naivety of wanting change without changing.

I have investigated the problem of the name to investigate the radical ecology notions of sustainability in the education context. Given that there is no simple resolution, I have decided to continue to use the name: ‘education for sustainability’, because it has been in use by Australian writers for quite some time, for example Tilbury (1997), and because it is now in use by radical environmentalists in Australia, as is indicated by the Australian Conservation Foundation’s publication of the Telos article by Fien (2001). Also given the reference to ‘sustainability’ rather than ‘sustainable development’ in the title of the Western Australian State Sustainability Strategy, and the reference to EfS in the document itself (2003, 245) it can reasonably be assumed that the field will become known as ‘education for sustainability’ in Western Australia. The central concern is that we do it! As well as the problem of the name, the deeper problem is the meaning of EfS, the purpose of schooling and the vision of society. What are we doing, how should we do it, and why?
3.2.2 The Meaning of Education for Sustainability

Culture and Language

As well as the ongoing problem of the meaning of sustainability or sustainable development as described in chapter two, a central problem in writing a meaning of EfS is that of the English language. Language conveys culture and a greater range of meanings than we are normally aware. As an example, academics are expected to ‘defend’ their philosophical positions. Defence is part of the language of war and antagonism and yet the language is used regularly in articles relating to peace and education. For example, Wals (1999, 4) and Fien (2001, 3) uncritically use the term ‘force’ in the context of EfS as a force for changing the future whereas this same sentiment can be written as ‘fuel’ for change UNESCO (1997). Bowers writes:

> We use the languages of our culture (spoken, written, kinesic, architectural, legal, and so forth) to communicate about relationships. At the same time, these languages act on our thought processes and behaviour by privileging the schemata of understanding encoded from past culturally mediated experiences. These schemata for organising, understanding, and valuing experience in culturally congruent ways are acquired as we learn to think within the languages of our cultural group. (1997, 98, 99)

The paradox is that we are endeavouring to change our culture using linguistic tools, which preserve the culture we are trying to change.

Putting aside linguistic determinism and arguments that concern whether language determines thought (for example Whorf, 1956), I wish only to acknowledge the existence of an ongoing, unresolved question. Sterling says:

> Let’s recognise here the problem of language – we have to use SOME words to convey what we mean. Language is a model and as such it can both extend our thinking, and limit it. I think the concept of ESD has stretched people’s thinking a good deal over recent years (including mine) … (2000, 52)

In the Sustainable Development Education Panel’s investigation on the language of sustainability, they explain the challenge as that of developing a language of personal relevance to all sectors of society that will help in effecting culture change. One of the implications of their research is that to understand this field, a long-term process of learning is required. They suggest that the process of language development will be evolutionary rather than invented because sustainable development is itself a journey
That is, this field is emergent, as is the role of theorists and practitioners who are engaged in it. It involves ‘learning’ towards sustainability.

*The Problem of a Central Dissonance*

Wals and Jickling write about the potential for learning using a concept with dissonance at its heart (which they call “learning on the edge”), together with the incumbent danger of “…mask[ing] central issues under the false pretence of a shared understanding, set of values and common vision of the future…” (2002, 223). To elaborate this contradiction, they use Orwell’s ‘doublethink’ notion, in which ordinary citizens may hold contradictory understandings of the same term and yet uncritically accept them both. This results in a state of linguistic dysfunction, which is ultimately in the interests of the dominant paradigm. They write:

> The power of universal discourse in reducing meaning to a minimum is such that, as in *1984*, antagonistic concepts can be conjoined in a single phrase (“war is peace”, “peace is war”) or concept (ie. “sustainable growth”) (2002, 223).

Further to the problem of masking central dissonant and critical issues, there are other connected issues in uncovering a meaning of EfS. Wals and Jickling write:

> Nobody has a single right vision of what a “good” lifestyle entails. Nobody yet knows how to best sustain the earth’s ecosystems for the benefit of ourselves, our children, and also for other forms of life – the more-than-human-world. It is a myth to think that there is a single right vision or a best way to sustain the earth or what kind of earth should be sustained. Underlying the shallow consensus that appears to be triggered by the introduction of sustainability, there are still norms, values and interests that are in conflict. At the same time, this shallow consensus itself can also serve specific prevailing norms, values and interests. (2002, 224)

Whilst recognising that an uncritical use of language is likely to support the dominant paradigm, on the other hand Sterling says:

> While it is true that we can’t know for sure what sustainability is, we need to be careful not to be adrift in a sea of relativism – the problems are far too urgent for this response to be adequate (2000, 52).

From Sterling’s perspective, we need action for change.

Orr would agree with Sterling. While referring to the postmodern debate about the social construction of nature, he writes:
The idea that we are free to reinvent nature is, I think, an indulgence made possible because we have temporarily created an artificial world based on the extravagant use of fossil fuels. But that idea will not be particularly useful for helping us create a sustainable and sustaining civilization... [Deconstructionism] ...prevents us from taking any constructive action what so-ever [for the preservation of endangered species]. (Orr, 2002, 195)

Nevertheless, contradiction, paradoxes and inherent tensions need to be worked with. Whilst ‘indulging’ in postmodern philosophy does not enhance biodiversity, resolve inequities, address salinity or address unsustainable consumption, there is a literature explaining how using language in contradictory ways helps us (and children) to think better (for example, Godel, 1969). We need philosophy and action. The Sustainable Development Education Panel’s (1998a) work on the language of learning for sustainability suggests the necessity to acknowledge and work with the dissonance, the creative edge of learning, in order to learn the paradigm to evolve it, to elaborate a new paradigm out of older practices. This calls for a participatory, reflective action learning methodology for research and social change.

3.3 A Way Forward: Learning Towards Sustainability

Sterling (2001) proposes a transformative learning model for reorientation of schools and society towards sustainability, which would regard everyone as learners. He writes:

This is what I term ‘sustainable education’, a change of educational culture, which both develops and embodies the theory and practice of sustainability in a way that is critically aware. This would be a transformative paradigm that values, sustains and realizes human potential in relation to the need to attain and sustain social, economic and ecological wellbeing, recognizing that they are deeply interdependent. Ecologically sustainable development depends on sustainable education and learning – which in turn manifests and sustains sustainable development: they are neither separate nor the same. It is an extension of the mutuality nicely summed up in the phrase, “you cannot learn without changing, or change without learning”. (2001, 22, emphasis given)

He says that this is nothing new, being the model used by Indigenous communities over the millennia.

Sterling asserts that in order to emerge, sustainable education will need to connect to positive social change in the wider social context and draw strength from it (2001, 23). The core idea is that the paradigm that co-evolves with sustainable education will be
transformative, participative, democratic, collaborative, synergistic, purposeful and holistic. EfS requires the articulation of a new epistemology of participation and a lived paradigm of sustainability (Sterling, 2001, 19). It aims to transform the education that does not value ecological thinking or sustainability issues (Sterling, 2001, 13) and requires a change from transmissive learning to transformative learning. The essential difference here is that transmissive learning is ‘instructive’, and usually ‘imposed’, whereas transformative education is constructive and participative (Sterling, 2001, 34). With constructive learning, the learner constructs and owns the meaning of the educational experience.

**A Participative Community Culture-Learning Approach**

Sterling (2001, 23) suggests that in order to emerge, sustainable education will need a connection with positive social change happening in the broader social arena to draw strength from it, however Bowers would say that the problem is the broader social paradigm. Bowers maintains that sustainability educators are not changing society, but overtly promulgating it through their unintentional uncritical acceptance of liberal assumptions which are deeply embedded within educational institutions and systems as well as language itself. Sterling’s learning approach to transformation, combined with Orr’s (1992 and 2002) bioregional perspectives on the re-emergence of civil life and the notion of the citizen in a strong democracy, provides an answer to Bowers’ critique of sustainability educators. The Sterling-Orr approach can be construed as a community culture-learning approach. This is supported by UNESCO:

> In a sustainable community, everyone is engaged in lifelong learning - developing the self-esteem, knowledge, skills, and wisdom to live in ways that support personal, social, and environmental health (2002a).

This helps to overcome the chicken or egg question, in that it is necessary to stress the coevolution of community and its educational processes, which prompts a re-elaborating of education as an element within community.

Participative democracy as organising principle for sustainability is a path not yet well trodden in education, but one that has considerable potential for community transformation, according to the EfS literature presented in this chapter. Many writers, for example Gough (1997, 100) and Sterling (2000, 53), comment that EfS is not achieving the outcomes to which the field aspires. A community-culture learning
approach organised through the principle of participative democracy, is a hopeful answer to the problem. Perras states that if a sustainable future were to be attained, it would need to be obtained at the local level, rather than the national or international levels (2000, 40). UNESCO says, “In the end, sustainable development will be made at the local community level” (2001a). Many writers suggest that successful EfS will be constructivist, will make particular use of social learning, will be bottom-up, will be connective, will be visionary (a round-tables approach), will be a learning approach (transformative rather than transmissive), will be reflective, will be community based and it will be as sustainability, in the sense that education and sustainability share these processes and visions (Hesselink et al., 2000, 41 – 47; UNESCO, 2002b, 7; Hill et al., 2001, 16).

Sterling (2000, 27) comments that the change agents themselves must have at least some change of awareness in their own thinking, so that they can implement EfS. According to Orr36 (1992, 85) ecoliteracy is the ability to ask: “What then?” Orr says this is the question to ask now, before the last forests wane, before we have warmed the planet insufferably and before the expansionist economy devours itself into oblivion. Orr’s “what then?” is identified with a minority tradition dating back at least to Jefferson, which emphasises participative democracy, simplicity, careful ecological design, extensive proficiency with natural systems, the sense of place, decentralisation where possible, holism, and human-scaled communities and technologies.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I reviewed EfS to present an educational framework through which to address the contribution schools can make to answer the important questions asked by the radical ecologists. I described in chapter two that international policy, particularly that of the UN (the Brundtland Report, the Rio Declaration, Agenda 21 and WSSD), allows for both the cultural and the technocentric discourses of sustainability. Advocates of the cultural discourses such as Orr (2002) warn that because the fundamental problem of economic growth has not been addressed, inequity and environmental destruction will continue unless education is fundamentally redesigned.

36 Who used the work of Garrett Hardin.
I described EfS as comprising a socially critical approach to teaching and learning which includes civic virtues and skills towards the implementation of a new transformative vision of education and society that is socially, ecologically, economically and politically sustainable. I illustrated that EE/EfS has a long history from nature studies towards a socially critical version, which is commonly called EfS, which sees that each pillar of sustainability must be achieved for all to be achieved.

I reviewed environmental education (EE)/EfS policies since the Tbilisi Conference in 1977, and showed that over the years there has been an increasing emphasis on the socially critical element of environmental education, on the transformation of education, on the significance of education to social transformation, and an increasing emphasis on the significance of education to the sustainability of the planet. Since at least the Declaration of Thessaloniki in 1997, education has been seen as a pillar of sustainability itself. That is, it has been recognised in policy that sustainability will not be possible without education, since we will have to deliberately learn a new way forward – sustainability will not happen by itself. Unfortunately, reality has usually fallen far short of the visions created by sustainability and EE/EfS policies.

The second section introduced some academic issues and current debates, which elaborate and attempt to address contention about the meaning of the field, which has a central dissonance. The contention is to decide on ways forward for full emergence of the field into the mainstream of education throughout the world. Whilst I have used the term EfS because it is in common use in Australia and Western Australia, it is possible that the field will not retain this name in the future as this term may have served out its main purpose of achieving international acceptance of the significance of social critique as environmental education praxis. Just as education about – and education through the environment were stages towards education for the environment (Fien, 1993, 16), it is likely that EfS will be seen as a stage towards a title which conveys a view of education as sustainability, in which a view of sustainability as learning is communicated.

In the third section, I reviewed work by Sterling (2001), Orr (1992 and 2002) and UNESCO (2002a) to introduce firstly a transformative education model for learning sustainability as a way forward, and secondly to present the idea of a participative community-culture learning approach. This approach has the potential to link school
with society in a practical way, which is a concern of Sterling and Orr in particular. I shall now review the community schooling literature. I regard community schooling as essential to EfS, since participative democracy has been shown in the literature to have the capacity to organise learning towards sustainability.
CHAPTER FOUR – POLITICS AND SCHOOLING: WHY NO SUSTAINABILITY ALREADY?

As I see it, the challenge is to enable schools to become places of, for and about transformation towards a sustainable, liveable future. For this, we need a politically embedded cultural and ecological understanding of sustainability, rather than one that would orient schools toward the economy.

Reorienting education for sustainability does not require large additional sums of money; it does require political will, from governments willing to model an inter-departmental, cooperative approach to sustainable development. Schools, other educational institutions and the community at large could then take up that lead with whole-of-school, community inclusive approaches that aim to engage each individual, adult and child, in the process of seeking sustainable lifestyles. (UNESCO, 2002b, 43)

In previous chapters, I showed through literature reviews that there is enhanced potential for EfS through engagement of the school community. Specifically, I pointed out that participative democracy as organising principle for learning sustainability at the local level had considerable potential.

I introduce this chapter with a section on the history and politics of schooling to show that schooling is always political. Following this, I review state policies followed by the community schooling literature. Although the writers of the community schooling material would not necessarily have associated their work with EfS, it is of great significance to EfS because of its potential for social and educational change and so I have regarded connecting them as a matter of importance. Following an explanation of community education and community schooling, I introduce the small schools movements, with a particular focus on the issue of school size and its relationship to effectiveness. Small schools can deliberately and very productively engage in community development and therefore, social and educational change.

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37 Fien (2002, 1-2) makes the point that higher education researchers who may not yet aware of EfS fail to make such links. Many excellent opportunities to progress the goal of EfS through work in other educational traditions await the emergence of such connectedness.
4.1 The Political Context of Schooling

It is now generally accepted that all schooling has a political context and is never neutral. Rather it is systematic and intrusive, aiming to enculturate a person with certain characteristics so that he/she will contribute towards a particular kind of society (Smyth and Shacklock, 1998, 11, 12, McLaren and Giroux, 1995, 30). Schools came into being as a means of shaping the moral and social beliefs of the population, which according to Hamilton (1990, 73) was originally for the benefit of a dominant elite. Debating personal qualities and kinds of society underlies the struggles of competing ideologies by which people have attempted to gain control of schools over the years (Smyth and Shacklock, 1998, 77 - 84). Schools are sites of cultural struggle involving parents, teachers, employers, governments and students as stakeholders. It is important to understand education and schooling as systematic political interventions that intend to transform relationships between human beings as well as between human beings and their natural and social environments.

4.1.1 Schools Reproduce Our Society’s Economic Orientation

The more dissatisfied we are with current modes of social organisation (and the more we are attracted to alternatives) the more likely we are to seize the opportunity to use educational contexts as levers for the sort of social change we aspire to (Scott, 2002, 7).

The political interventions in education have varied in form according to the era, and the social and political context. Many have been aimed at producing productive workers and citizens who will strive obediently to progress the goals of their society. Spring (1975, 21) stated that many studies throughout the century support the conclusion that whether in Nazi Germany or the USA the school had become an institution for political control. Since it was an institution designed to shape and change people, "it was continually being sought as a weapon for different political factions" (Spring, ibid.). Spring says that by the twentieth century all political groups wanted to gain control of the schools to spread their own ideology and mould the type of characters they saw as desirable for the modern world (1975, 21). For this reason people who have sought a radical transformation of society have adopted a highly critical posture towards systems of schooling.
The argument, then, is not that the schools have failed, but that they have succeeded too well, and that the values around which they have traditionally been organized now threaten other values deeply held. (Fein, 1971, 158-9)

Fein's argument is typical of the critical and radical theorists who have long argued that schools have been extremely successful in their objective of reproducing the dominant paradigm. For example Mathews states:

There is no doubt that schools are, on the whole, effective in doing what they do; namely reproducing a society's reproductive forces and productive relations. (1980, 194)

Young's citation from Habermas below, explicates the dynamics of Fein's and Mathews' view that schools have been successful in their task of dominant paradigm reproduction:

The educational history (Bildungsgeschichte) of humanity develops in the same way as that of society - as Hegel grasped in The Phenomenology of Spirit. The education of individuals takes place, at a given developmental state of civilisation, in the manner of a reproduction of a model of experience that is constitutive of it. (Habermas, 'Pedagogische Optimismus', 1961: 256, in Young, 1990)

Ferguson writes it this way:

You can only have a new society, the visionaries have said, if you change the education of the younger generation. Yet the new society itself is the necessary force for change in education. It's like the old dilemma: You can't get a job without experience, but you can't get experience because no one will give you a job. (1980, 280)

Smyth W.J. (2001, 34) writes on being products of our own history while simultaneously being creators of it. Firstly the mass schooling model is one that reproduces the model of experience that constitutes society. Secondly because education reproduces the model of experience that is constitutive of society there is a need to change the model of experience that is constitutive of society in order to change education and society. Sterling writes:

The rhetoric of ‘education for change’ suggests that society can be changed by education, through a linear cause-effect relationship. In fact, education is a sub-system of society and is far more shaped by society than vice-versa… Our concern needs to change from ‘how can ESD change people’s behaviours towards sustainability’ to ‘how can education and society change together in a mutually affirming way, towards more sustainable patterns for both?’ (Cited in Paden, 2000, 2)

Although radicals declare the success of state systems of schooling in achieving the objectives of the state, contradictory tendencies are acknowledged, as in the paradox of Catholic schools which have, at times, produced some of the most radical and liberated people (Mathews, 1980, 195).
In 2002a, Sterling argued that we need to seriously critique the relationship between society and education, and re-think education accordingly to improve our focus more on two purposes of education which are currently missing: learner centred education as well as the transformative role of education. For UNESCO (2002b, 18), to prepare “students to transform society for the future” is an objective for the reorientation of education. There are substantial political obstacles to a socially transformative vision for education.

The critique of business-as-usual is sufficiently well known for a very brief overview to be sufficient for showing its place in this dissertation’s themes. Throughout the history of public schooling, there have always been critics of modernity’s purpose for education. The critics have argued that education for young humans should involve much more than simply preparing them for the workforce. Whilst progressive streams of educational thought have been taken up in a variable way, in recent years schools in countries of the north have been harnessed more closely to the supposed requirements of the economy (Smyth and Shacklock, 1998). Accordingly, the modernist agenda has been reoriented towards a narrow, technicist view of education for economic benefit. An example of this is the current Australian emphasis on benchmarked statewide testing for literacy and numeracy. The modernist agenda has been concerned not with the purpose of education so much as efficient, cost saving administration and delivery systems of education together with narrowly defined accountability, control of standards and outcomes. Orr asks: why is this so? His own response is as follows.

Part of the answer, I believe, is found in the progressive diminution of the idea of learning throughout the 20th century. Far removed from the tradition of the great philosophers, the discourse on education has become a technical subject requiring only efficient administration by technocrats… But this whittled-down version of education is also convenient to those whose interests are well served by a docile, but technically competent, public, otherwise unable to think critically or to act as citizens. (Orr, 2001, 7)

Smyth, W. J. (2001, 186) makes the case that a deliberate mythology has been constructed in which teachers and schools are seen as the cause of economic failure. This mythology not only painted teachers and schools as the cause of economic failure, but also prescribed a cure of stringent managerialist procedures for schooling. The cure included teacher appraisal schemes, basic skills teaching, standardised testing, tight
classroom discipline, performance indicators, longer days in school and cost effectiveness measures. If these prescriptions were followed, then magically schools would once again become economic servants. Smyth and Shacklock describe the recent shift to a narrowly focused economic determinism that prescribes schooling and teachers' work:

From the situation a few years ago where teaching was seen by and large to be in the hands of educational professionals, we have now moved in most parts of the world to a set of ideologies, policies, practices and discourses where consumerist, contractualist, managerialist, and marketised values and beliefs are what supposedly counts most in shaping teaching. … The changes currently being inflicted upon schools… represent the displacement of a set of discourses about the educational and social utility of schooling, to ones that are driven by narrow vocationalist, managerial and economistic agenda. (1998, 135)

In critique, Smyth and Shacklock argue that this economic determinist agenda is based on a set of views on what schooling ought to be (their emphasis). They assert that the views are:

undebated, untested, have no empirical basis to them, are without foundation in terms of an established nexus with known forms of teaching, and hold no hope for the creation of more socially just, tolerant, compassionate or egalitarian societies. (Smyth and Shacklock, 1998, 135: my emphasis)

They argue convincingly for a revitalisation of the discourses of teaching and learning, which is a rediscovery of the primacy of teaching and learning through solution-oriented, practical theory building. Smyth and Shacklock argue that we need to talk about teaching in terms of the improvement of children's life chances, equality and social justice. They say that the real agenda involves learning rather than efficiency, accountability and effectiveness. The creation of more socially just, environmentally sane, compassionate egalitarian societies is the EfS agenda. Orr (2002) and Cortese (1999) in advocating the cultural discourses of EfS, argue that economic growth is antithetical to the major task of bringing the planet (and education) to sustainability. It follows that schooling oriented towards the economy unavoidably authorises the reproduction of unsustainability. Bonnett suggests an explanation for this:

In tandem with this runs an impoverishment of our conception of educational knowledge and what is involved in coming to know… Hardly much place here for a genuine engagement with the subtleties of unique situations and issues embedded in the rich contents of developed bodies of knowledge and understanding, or for listening to the call of what is
incipient within the areas of thinking that they open up – intimations of the yet unknown that lead thought on, and a determination to follow wherever this leads. … thinking, understanding and knowing in this demanding sense are quite left behind by a preoccupation with pre-formed and pre-ordering abstract thinking skills and strategies. (2003, 642, 643, my emphasis)

The work of the education critics suggests that serious questions need to be asked in the public arena about all aspects of public schooling. Why do we have schools? What is the proper purpose of schooling? Can schools produce a better society? Do children need to be separated from their families for educational purposes? What function do schools serve their communities, and what function should schools serve their communities? How can schools help to re-make democratic communities? How should the school community participate in the resources of schooling? How can communities re-build democracy, a classless society and justice through schools? To consider these questions, I shall look to the education philosophers and radical thinkers.

4.1.2 The Purpose of Education

Bonnett (2003, 563) explains that our understanding of the underlying nature, character and purpose of certain fundamental notions such as truth, knowledge, personhood and morality, determines what we mean by the term: ‘education’. To transform our understanding of these notions would be to transform our notion of education. For example, if someone were to re-conceive knowledge as participative and relational rather than a realm accessed by pure reason, her view of curriculum would be radically transformed. These understandings determine the metaphysical space in which educational activities are performed and interpreted. Bonnet writes:

This is experienced in the ethos or ‘feel’ of participating in education, living in this space. It configures one’s sense of the spirit in which the enterprise is undertaken – for example, one’s sense of the value and place of one’s own beliefs and reason. …It invites pupils to participate in certain understandings of the ‘real’ world by initiating them into a certain form, or forms, of sensibility in terms of which what is truly significant – ‘real’ - is to be identified and comprehended. (2003, 564)

Bonnett indicates that in considering the purpose of education, it is important to consider our relationship with nature, which is in constant interplay with the constitutive elements of education, which are truth, knowledge, morality and personhood.
To Grow Up Mentally and Physically Engaged with the Natural World

The Romantics of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries including Rousseau informed and continues to inform a child-centred, spiritual approach to education. Rousseau stressed wholeness and harmony, and a concern for the person of the learner. He believed that it is possible to preserve the 'original perfect nature' of the child, through controlling the education environment and recognising the developmental stage of the child (Smith, 1997). For Rousseau, education and nature were closely connected and the child needed to grow up mentally and physically engaged with the natural world (Bowers, 2003, 567). During the eighteenth century, nearly all thinkers urged their readers to follow nature, which was the touchstone of religion and politics (ibid.). A spiritual, ecologically connected and engaged education was the intention. The educational Romantics held that connection with nature was a significant purpose of education.

Connection with Nature Together with an Agenda of Social Critique

The work of the Transcendalists of the 1830s, including Emerson and Thoreau, also informs child-centred, spiritual approaches to education grounded in a strong appreciation of, and strong sense of connectedness with nature. In addition, Thoreau’s strong social agenda urged civil non-compliance with unethical government practices such as slavery (Emerson, 1842 and Thoreau, nd). At the turn of the twentieth century, Steiner inspired a child-centred, nature-embedded education movement based upon his spiritual, creative, experiential education as a path to higher knowledge. Montessori, of the same era as Steiner, also inspired a child-centred, experiential education movement, in which no child failed because they learned at their own pace using materials provided for them at their readiness (Smith, 1997). The transcendalists continued with the aim of connection with nature, with the incorporation of a socially critical agenda. Bonnett comments that child-centred education “met its nemesis” in failing to meet the needs of the competitive technologically based burgeoning global economy. He says that subsequent philosophers found it to be pernicious, and they removed its vitality: severed it from its metaphysical base, with the effect of turning it into a “philosophical and political toy”. (2003, 568)
Dewey emphasised social learning, and focused on the incorporation of experience, reflection on learning, a focus on environments for learning, and relational skills for democracy. He said:

In sum, I believe that the individual who is to be educated is a social individual and that society is an organic union of individuals. If we eliminate the social factor from the child we are left only with an abstraction; if we eliminate the individual factor from society, we are left only with an inert and lifeless mass. (Dewey, 1897)

The progressive educators such as Dewey provided some inspiration for the critical education theorists of the 1960s and 1970s such as Freire, Apple and Giroux. During the 1960s and 1970s in particular a large amount of critical education literature was generated which challenged modernist schooling assumptions, methods, structure, function, power relationships as well as the existence of schools themselves. There were a variety of alternative types put forward, but one idea to which all critical educators subscribed was the importance of small scale, and they all agreed that education is primarily about relationships. The emphasis with these critical educators was less on connection with nature, and increasingly on challenging modernist structures and economic purposes through social learning and the deepening of democracy. The experiential foundation of learning was still highly regarded.

**Liberty from Domination**

Those who have sought to radically transform education have participated in a tradition known as libertarian education, which has ultimately been concerned with liberty from domination and oppression. According to Smith, "A libertarian education is above all an education which liberates" (1983, 87). Teaching methods are central concerns for radical educators, who hold that methods of teaching and school organisation are directly linked to the type of character modelled by the school. Broadly, libertarian education comprises a special attitude to authority, a concern to bring school close to life, an emphasis on cooperation rather than competition and an awareness of the problem of the relationship between society and school. The special attitude to authority embraces the teacher-pupil relationship (favouring a more equal relationship), the nature of learning (favouring a rational, questioning, problem-solving approach on the part of the pupil), the government of the school (insisting on local, participative decision-making), discipline (rejecting punishment imposed by a higher authority), the kinds of
knowledge taught (rejecting dogma of all kinds, including religious teaching) and the nature of assessment (rejecting competitive assessment such as marks or grades) (Spring, 1975, 23).

Increasingly, the radicals focused on mainstream social change, recognising the problem as the relationship between school and society. The educational aim of connection with nature was considerably less significant, however. As Bonnett (2003, 568) points out, this does not mean the influence of nature had dissipated, for it may mean the opposite. It means that the understanding of nature had drastically changed. Bonnett says that:

> Our sense of nature – what it is and our position with regard to it – conditions our understanding of ourselves and of our place in the grater scheme of things. In this sense the term ‘nature’ is not merely a noun, but a regulatory principle operating at a number of levels and in a variety of ways. (ibid.)

He says that the way nature is understood, for example as a mechanical system or as a living, sacred expression of divinity, has significant implications for our attitudes to the world, each other and ourselves.

**Social Transformation and Re-Making Society**

The radical educators such as Goodman, Illich, Marin and Kozol would restructure society whilst radically restructuring (or deschooling) schooling. The radical social change agenda is characterised by an emphasis on process, as this comment by Spring demonstrates:

> There should not be a blueprint for future change but, rather, a constant dialogue about means and ends. Education should be at the heart of such a revolutionary endeavour. (1975, 146)

Radical education has traditionally stood outside the dominant streams of educational development, which have been directed at reforming society rather than radically changing it. Public schools can reform and improve but they do not attempt to make basic structural changes to society. For instance, according to Spring public schools address the issue of poverty by teaching the children of the poor to function within the existing society, whereas radical educators would address the social attitudes that underpin the social structure (1975, 9-10). Marin (1975, 1) characterises the radical education movement of the 1970s as a rejection of the institutionalisation of experience and a reaction against the monopoly of the state over the young’s time, imagination and
energy. Rather, radical, communitarian alternatives would be planned with the objective of constructing a new society, which would preserve the memory of what community and freedom have meant historically and philosophically. From these perspectives, the purpose of education was to create a new society.

The major themes of critique have emphasised the political, social and economic power of the school. One theme has been that government funded schooling leads to attempts to produce citizens who blindly accept the dictates of that government and who uphold the authority of the government even when it runs counter to their personal, community or collective interests. This is 'blind' nationalism (for example Postman and Weingartner, 1969, 15, 25, 73; Spring, 1975, 14). A second theme has been that the system produces workers who are trained by schooling processes to accept boring, monotonous work that has no personal satisfaction. The workers do not seek fundamental changes in the system (for example Freire, 1973, 34). A third theme has been the myth of social mobility through education that has accompanied mass education, yet education credentials have been distributed according to existing social class divisions. Public education has been accused of further dividing the social classes (Spring, 1975, 14, McLaren and Giroux, 1995, 31).

The Marxists, the Freudian left and the deschoolers are three groups of critical theorists who have stood out. The Marxists, of whom Paulo Freire is an outstanding exponent, aim to achieve freedom from ideological control and oppression by raising levels of consciousness and connecting thought and learning to transformation. Freire maintains that the overcoming of human alienation in the modern industrial world is the first step in radical change (1973). The Freudian left, from which A.S. Neill and Wilhelm Reich stand out, has emphasised the necessity of changing character structure. The deschoolers, of whom Ivan Illich and John Holt are exponents, highlighted the schism between education-as-learning for autonomy in life and schooling. Goodman (1975, 64-67) writes that schools emphasise many of society’s worst features, and should be decentralised throughout society in shopfronts and clubrooms that would house multigraded groups of twenty to thirty children who would learn in the community. Illich argues that the problem is schools per se, which are a source of ideological control.

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39 In Australia, 'private' schools also receive government funding on a sliding scale and must conform to the same curriculum as government schools.
because they reproduce and reinforce the existing social structure and make people dependent on the authority of institutions and experts.

Illich (1975, 69-81) proposes that society be remade to avoid privilege and economic power through transformation of consciousness about the nature of learning. It would require deschooling the culture and social structure through participatory politics in community so that growing up can be classless. If this is not implemented, according to Illich (1975, 81) “we will get a brave new world in which Big Brother educates us all”40. The perceived need for changing the family structure and community were common to all three groups of theorists, as was the belief that power and domination by social structures depend on child-rearing practices and ideological control. Further, they all believe that the power of the state and economy rests on a submissive population. In the work of the education philosophers and critics of the 1970s and 1980s the non-human environment is rarely mentioned in educational theory, which is a significant contrast to the Romantics and Transcendalists of earlier eras. Bonnett (2003, 572) says that the way we regard and treat nature says a great deal about the sort of beings we are. He cites Plumwood who shows that western conceptions of human nature are defined against nature.

**Humanistic Education – Human Centred**

Humanistic education emerged in the 1970s and 1980s, inspired by the critical educators together with the humanistic psychologists such as Carl Rogers. The humanistic educators are interested in the human qualities of genuineness, unconditional positive regard, empathy and understanding in relationships, so that the learning environment is self-directed and oriented towards real learning rather than the struggle for power (Rogers, 1967, 304-311). Values and values clarification as well as cooperative learning for practical democracy are emphasised through the humanist education literature. The constructivists such as Vygotsky (1896-1934) showed that children construct their own meaning on the basis of their own socio-culturally and linguistically embedded activities. Constructivist Howard Gardner demonstrated that children do not have one single linguistic/logical ‘intelligence’ as had been believed, but they have eight different intelligences which are all used in different, overlapping ways.

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40 A chilling forecast which recent radical commentators such as McLaren (1995) now say is unfolding.
in different contexts. In order to think intelligently, children need to have depth in the subject, which enables them to develop well-considered values (Gardner, 2001). Constructivists contend that learning is relational so collaboration is a feature of the learning environment. Humanism has been criticised by radical ecologists and EfS advocates because its unchallenged goal is human authority, and consequently the human relationship with the land is occluded because it is assumed that the human-nature relationship is utilitarian - nature is obstacle or opportunity (Bonnett, 2003, 708-710).

A critique of the radicals enables considerable depth to emerge for sustainability. Their cooperative, bottom-up, community based approaches are commendable from an EfS perspective. However, each of the perspectives would be greatly strengthened by correcting general weaknesses. Firstly, their work is not intentionally ecologically grounded. Secondly, their creativity is not specifically culturally embedded\(^{41}\), leaving the potential for continuous creativity and emancipation for its own sake – ever distant from cultural, structural and ecological embeddedness. Specifically, each system would benefit from corrections to their main orientations. The Marxists need to ensure that freedom from ideological oppression is based on a critique of oppression, ideology \textit{and} on a critique of emancipation as per Bowers (1997). The critique should be self- and collaboratively-reflective, and strongly grounded in the sense of place and cultural context, with a deep sense of ecological connectedness. The Freudian left need to ensure that the notion of character structure is grounded in a sense of the individual as part of a social- and life-system rather than that of a separate, atomistic self as described by Mathews (1996). It needs to take account of a view of intelligence that is embedded in systems, and a view of creativity within a culturally critical and ecologically oriented ethic.

There are philosophers who still defend the economic aims of education, for example Winch (2002). He explains that these aims are as legitimate as any other, having individual aims of fulfilment through employment and social aims of well-being through economic prosperity. Like the technocratic versions of sustainability that have not produced planetary sustainability, the modernist, economically motivated versions

\(^{41}\) Some ideologies may be exempt from these two criticisms, for example Steiner Schools whose curricula are embedded in the great literary traditions and archetypes and whose children are required to develop a strong ecological sense of place.
of schooling have not delivered their promises of social mobility, worker fulfilment or economic security for the country. I shall turn to the EfS advocates.

**Education for a Sustainable Future**

An inspection of the Agenda 21 objectives suggests that the unstated purpose for education is to maintain the existence of a liveable planet. UNEP (1992a, 1) dictates that all education systems be reoriented towards sustainable development. UNESCO (1997a, 2002a and 2002b) writes that education is to bring about a sustainable future:

…[T]he international community now believes that we need to foster – through education – the values, behaviour and lifestyles required for a sustainable future (UNESCO, 2002b).

As well as the social purpose of education, UNESCO also reaffirms the self-determination purpose of education:

Education is an indispensable means to give to all women and men in the world the capacity to own their own lives, to exercise personal choice and responsibility, to learn throughout life without frontiers, be they geographical, political, cultural, religious, linguistic or gender (1997c, item 9).

For Wals and Jickling, the purpose of education (higher education at least) is emancipation (2002, 225). They write, “sustainability is not holy”. They argue that it should not be an organizing principle or end of education, because it might become uncreative or uneducational, rather, it should be used to facilitate the transformation towards lifelong learning (2002, 229). Wals’ and Jickling’s notions are based upon an individualist understanding of education as the vehicle for emancipation. Without clarification, their work is subject to the critique of Bowers in that it is not deeply culturally critical. The problems of a destructive society are linguistically embedded in the work of Wals and Jickling, and would be continually reinforced through emancipation from the knowledge of the elders, at least some of which is likely to be ecologically embedded. Wals’ and Jickling’s orientation as process towards lifelong learning is commendable, as is the emphasis on philosophy and ethics, which are extremely important. Mortensen (2000, 15-23) addresses the ‘emancipation’ problem

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42 Unfortunately, although their 2002 article was written a considerable amount of time after Bowers’ many books, they did not address his higher education concerns at all.

43 There appears to be a strong contradiction between Bowers’ critique of the process of critique, and Wals’ and Jickling’s calls for new work and research through continual critique of philosophy, ideology and epistemology and investigation of dissonance. However, these positions do not need to be seen as mutually exclusive. Bowers is concerned with the cultural nature of knowledge.
with ‘empowerment’, referring to empowerment for paradigm shifting towards global sustainability. According to Mortensen, education is for individual empowerment towards cultural transformation for the goal of global sustainability.

According to Hesselink and Goldstein (2000, 125 - 140) the IUCN’s view is that education is to enable “individuals, communities and nations to take responsibility for living sustainably”. To this end, they have developed a series of sustainable living principles to be used as guideposts, and the journey itself will be the learning process. They see education as an instrument for social change, along with the changing of international, national and local policies, and defend their instrumental stance on the basis of their perception of the pragmatics of reality.

Fien (2001, 1) says that education will need to “motivate and empower people to participate in working towards a sustainable future”. According to Wheeler (2000, 1) our greatest challenge is educating the youth of today to have the requisite values, skills and knowledge to “shape their lives and the world around them successfully”. Swimme and Berry write:

…education might well be defined in the story of the universe, of the planet earth, of life systems, of life systems, and of consciousness, all as a single story, and recognising the human role in the story. The primary role of education should be to enable individual humans to fulfil their proper role in this larger pattern of meaning. (1994, 256)

Educators for sustainability generally accept the view that the creation of a liveable, sustainable future is an important goal of education, and accept the view that a major systemic reorientation towards a transformative, ecologically connected paradigm is required. The IUCN, Orr (1992, 2002), Fien and Tilbury (2002, 6) and UNESCO (2002b) point to the transformative potential of learning sustainability through local communities and for this, participatory democracy can work as an organising principle. UNESCO (2002b, 43) writes that the entire purpose of education is “the simple idea of ensuring a better quality of life for everyone, now and for generations to come”⁴⁴.

I have shown that philosophers through the ages have proposed a variety of purposes for education, including holistic development of the self and connection with nature, personal empowerment and fulfilment, a socially just and egalitarian society, skills for

⁴⁴ A good idea, but definitely not simple!
democracy, critical, autonomous thinking and action, social transformation, economic prosperity, worker fulfilment, the construction of a sustainable future and combinations of these. Bonnett (1997, 263) writes that education should assert its own distinctive purposes rather than simply attend to those dominant in society. He says:

…many of the issues invite a profound reappraisal of conceptions of knowledge, human consciousness and what counts as an adequate relationship with the world, upon which any conception of education must be premised. There is philosophical work of the highest importance to be done here. (ibid.)

The point is to recognise and rethink conceptions of truth, knowledge, morality and personhood, which are in constant interplay with our relationship with nature. In considering our relationship to nature Bonnett (2003, 707) asks the question of authentic dwelling: “How, today, should we be in the world?”

4.1.3 Our Policies and Strategies Do Not Orient Towards Sustainability

Having presented some shifting and competing purposes of education, most with a limited view of environment, I shall now turn to policies in order to answer the question of why we do not have a sustainable society already when international sustainability policies and agreements have been in place for many years. The Commonwealth Government's Environment Australia released the “Environmental Education for a Sustainable Future: National Action Plan for Environmental Education”45 in 2000 (Commonwealth of Australia, 2000). Strategies which form the National Action Plan are comprehensive and aim to improve the profile, coordination and quality of environmental education activities and resources for schools and community organisations through provision of extra direction, professional services and professional development for teachers.

Environmental education in NSW is an example of an Australian state policy. It is mandated through the Environmental Education Act – NSW 1999. In the Environmental Education Policy for Schools, the NSW Department of Education and Training writes that: "Environmental Education is the responsibility of the whole school community" (2001 p. 5). The policy addresses curriculum, resources and grounds. In July 2002, the NSW Government released an Environmental Management Strategy for the schools and

45 The definition of environmental education provided at the beginning of the EfS section of this chapter is that of the Commonwealth Government’s National Action Plan.
TAFE Institutes sector, which provides a framework that encompasses environmental planning and reporting processes of all NSW government educational institutions. It also allows for the development of an award and recognition scheme to acknowledge staff and students who make a positive contribution towards ecological sustainability through environmental action (NSW Government, 2002, 2). Its strength is that environmental education is mandatory through legislation, and that schools must implement an Environmental Management Strategy.

As of December 2003, the Western Australian Environmental Education Strategy is due for release at any time46, and is expected to achieve a similar purpose to the National Action Plan in the Western Australian regional setting. The definition of environmental education in the draft strategy is the same as that in the National Action Plan47. Objectives of the Western Australian Environmental Education Strategy and Action Plan are:

Objective One: Coordination and Integration
Objective Two: Government Leadership
Objective Three: Formal Education
Objective Four: Building Partnerships with the Community
Objective Five: Building Partnerships with Industry and Business (Government of Western Australia, 2002)

Objective three, formal education, is detailed as:

To ensure that all students, in all forms of education, are provided with environmental education that develops an environmental ethic and an understanding of sustainability, as well as the knowledge, concepts, skills and values necessary to enable them to recognise the environmental impact of their personal and work choices, and to act to minimise those impacts (Government of Western Australia, 2002, p. 18).

These action plans will possibly contribute towards the legitimating of environmental education within the mainstream of education. In addition, they potentially provide coordination and a framework for the further development of environmental education towards sustainability.

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46 To the best of my knowledge, it is now three or more years since the Environmental Education strategy has been ready for its launch. Even senior public servants working close to the Western Australian Minister for the Environment, whose task it is to launch the strategy, are not able to cast any light upon the situation.

47 The definition of Environmental Education given in the National Action Plan, which I have cited in chapter three, is: “Raising awareness, acquiring new perspectives, values, knowledge and skills, and formal and informal processes leading to changed behaviour in support of an ecologically sustainable environment” (Commonwealth of Australia, 2000, 3).
The problem with the Australian National Action Plan and both the New South Wales and the draft Western Australian environmental education strategies, is that they generally lack social critique and leave unaddressed the broader EfS agenda of systemic reorientation towards sustainability. In the case of the Western Australian State Sustainability Strategy, the background paper is underpinned by social critique (Wooltorton, 2002) but a narrower, ‘environmental communications’ approach and series of actions comprise the four pages devoted to education towards the back of the 303 page document. In the Western Australian State Sustainability Strategy, EfS is introduced as follows:

Education for sustainability seeks to develop civic virtues in, and engage, motivate and empower all Western Australians, through formal and non-formal educational experiences, to change their lifestyle choices, undertake personal and social change and to work towards achieving a sustainable future (Government of Western Australia, 2003, 245).

The strengths of the definition are that EfS seeks to develop civic virtues, and that the intent is to work towards a sustainable future. There are problems with the definition. It does not refer to learning or process. It does not include the development of socially critical perspectives or a critique of consumption, which is presently one of the main drivers of unsustainable practices in industrialised countries (UNEP, 2000, UNESCO 1997c). The definition does refer to changing lifestyle choices as well as personal and social change, but it does not specify the nature of the changes. Personal and social change can, and often does in Western Australia, refer to the purchasing of a grander house nearer the beach in a leafier, more expensive suburb and possibly a second house in the South West, maybe on a canal or in a newly created subdivision where native bush has recently been cleared after confrontation with conservationists. The problematic EfS definition allows for the possibility of disconnected change for its own sake (see Bowers, 1995). Further, other than “civic virtue” there is no reference in the definition to social justice, appropriate development, democracy/decision-making or community as legitimate components of EfS. Unfortunately, the requirement for systemic reorientation towards sustainability is not mentioned at all, although the following precedes the definition:

We need to raise awareness of sustainability and provide education for sustainability if we are to shift to a more sustainable society (Government of Western Australia, 2003, 244, emphasis given).

At least there is recognition that a more sustainable society is the vision.
After the definition referred to above, the introduction to EfS in the Western Australian State Sustainability Strategy continues as follows:

Education for sustainability can be described in four phases:

- **Awareness raising** – ‘Does it matter to me?’
- **Shaping of values** – ‘Should I do something about it?’
- **Developing knowledge and skills** – ‘How can I do something about it?’
- **Making decisions and taking action** – ‘What will I do?’

(Government of Western Australia, 2003, 245, my emphasis)

These may have been taken from the discussion papers that were prepared for the Environmental Education National Action Plan (Environment Australia, 1999) or Fien (2001). The writer of the Environment Australia discussion papers stated (a paragraph above the list of components) that the particular components are sometimes misleadingly described as ‘stages’. There is a significant difference between seeing these components as EfS goals (which are associated with broader socially critical EfS curriculum) and phases (which can be implemented without significant social or personal transformation). The problem with using a simple, direct application of these components as phases is that a shallow rather than a deep understanding of environmentalism can be invoked resulting in little overall transformative learning, although some local environmental problem solving can be the result which is very useful. The difference between these two is illustrated by this description:

Education for sustainability is ultimately about education and capacity building and only secondly about environmental problem-solving. Traditionally, environmental education has been justified as a contribution to environmental problem-solving and has often been evaluated according to whether environmental improvements have been achieved or not. However, the citizenship focus of education for sustainability emphasises educational changes and learning as a precursor to solving environmental problems. Of course, it is also desirable for students to solve the environmental problems that concern them, as this can contribute both to sustainability and to a sense of self-esteem and empowerment. (Fien, 2001, 19)

State policies and strategies need to include a transformative view of learning (Sterling, 2001; UNESCO, 2002b, 7 - 8). The social nature of learning needs to be recognised and specifically addressed in policies and strategies (UNESCO 2002b, 7). If EfS policies, strategies and programs explicitly include and link the four UNESCO principles of conservation, peace and equity, appropriate development and democracy, using
participative democracy as the organising for learning pillar, they will have a foundation for socially transformative learning. Education would thus be seen as a participatory process involving all areas of civil society. This is in line with UNESCO who state:

Creating such links demands a deeper, more ambitious way of thinking about education, one that retains a commitment to critical analysis while fostering creativity and innovation. In short, it demands that education promotes a system of ethics and values that is sensitive to cultural identity, multicultural dialogue, democratic decision-making and the appropriate use and management of natural resources. (2002b, 8)

As well as creating the links, the policies, strategies and programs also need to include an element of learning how to learn. As a whole, transformative learning is a radical departure from the shallow, commonly accepted view of learning. This is a significant part of the task of EfS (Sterling, 2001).

Most of the remainder of the education section in the State Sustainability Strategy is a discussion of programs already underway and ideas for what schools and community groups could do to raise awareness of the environment and sustainability. The objectives are:

To develop a clear strategy to develop a community that embraces and works to achieve sustainability.
To develop curriculum support to develop sustainability education.
To use educational buildings and grounds to demonstrate sustainability.
To assist teachers to develop their understandings and skills in sustainability.

The recommended actions include the development of a comprehensive communications strategy on sustainability for formal and informal education; implement the environmental education strategy; assign a senior officer within the Department of Education and Training with responsibility for formal environmental and sustainability education through the Curriculum Framework, as well as a variety of recommendations for partnerships, community programs and transport actions. The objectives are admirable, although the recommended actions are disappointing in that they neglect the UN and UNESCO policies on reorientation of education towards sustainability.

It is sad that EfS has been represented in a state strategy in such a simplistic manner when this major opportunity presented itself. The action plan seems to have been prepared without an adequate understanding of the distinction between EfS and
environmental education. EfS arises from a history of environmental education, but EfS is now a wider agenda of social transformation. As Paden (2000, 8) writes, environment, equity and economic goals are considered as a whole in EfS, so that each is promoted to the advantage of the other. All EfS advocates and international policies agree that the major task is system reorientation towards sustainability. The main education recommendation in the State Sustainability Strategy of a comprehensive communication strategy on EfS, is a poor substitute for this.

The most problematic aspect of the Western Australian State Sustainability Strategy from the perspective of EfS, is that education is considered so unimportant that it is included as a subsection of community, towards the end of the document. The State Sustainability Strategy as a whole caters appropriately for most aspects of sustainability, but it almost completely overlooks the role of learning as an integral component of sustainability. Sustainability is about learning (UNESCO, 2002b) and education is the real key to sustainability (Sterling, 2002b). Sterling writes:

…it's not so much about integrating sustainability into education as the other way round (2002a).

There is a half page on change and sustainability in the State Sustainability document, ending with the sentiment: “Herein lies the hope for the future” (Government of Western Australia, 2003, 35). Throughout the document there are frequent references to ongoing dialogue and the significance of community engagement, but sadly the document stops short of explaining these as learning opportunities towards sustainability. UNESCO identifies significant remaining issues and challenges in EfS. The first of these is:

Better integrating education for sustainable development into sustainable development policies in a wider range of countries, e.g. economic, environment and population policies (2002b, 43).

This remains an issue in the WA State Sustainability Strategy. Education and public awareness has been recognised as a pillar of sustainability at least since the Thessaloniki Conference in 1997 (UNESCO, 1997c). With the omission of reorientation towards sustainability in the education section, the lack of significance given to education as a key element of change towards sustainability in the overall document, together with the lack of social critique, the status quo has not been challenged. Accordingly, the Western Australian State Sustainability Strategy is out of
line with international organisations\textsuperscript{48} such as UNESCO (2002a) and UNESCO (1999) as well as the Western Australian Curriculum Council (1998). I suggest that the following be added to the State Sustainability Strategy’s goals: ‘Incorporate education for sustainability into all enterprise in Western Australia, including government departments and agencies, industry of all descriptions, non-government organisations as well as profit-based and non-profit based companies, organisations and voluntary groups’. I also suggest that EfS be one of the foundation principles of the State Sustainability Strategy.

Unfortunately, the ACF’s (2000) \textit{Blueprint for a Sustainable Australia} does not see education as an integral part of social change towards sustainability either, and the ACF published the 2001 Tela Series book by Fien, \textit{Education for sustainability: Reorienting Australian schools for a sustainable future}, separately the following year.

The Western Australian Curriculum Framework of 1998 is set in an outline of present and future conditions. The outline comprises:

- cultural diversity, changes in the family structure, rapid pace of technological change, global environmental issues, changing nature of social conditions, changes in the workplace, inter-dependence in the global economy, and uncertain standards of living. (Curriculum Council, 1998, inside front cover)

The Western Australian Curriculum framework is sufficiently flexible to enable the implementation of the curriculum, process and community requirements of EfS. The Western Australian Curriculum Framework, which ascertains the expected learning outcomes of all Western Australian children in Kindergarten to year 12, contains numerous outcomes pertinent to sustainability, particularly in the Society and Environment learning area. For example, the Active Citizenship learning outcome is:

- Students demonstrate active citizenship through their behaviours and practices in the school environment, in accordance with the principles and values associated with the democratic process, social justice and ecological sustainability (Curriculum Council, 1998, p. 261).

The Curriculum Council clearly and repeatedly states that demonstrations of behaviours and practices are required, rather than simply knowledge, skills, values or critique.

\textsuperscript{48} Even though a significant number of governments around the world are now incorporating the EfS agenda into their sustainability policies, there are still those who have not fulfilled their educator’s high expectations. For example, Sterling (2002b) expresses disappointment in Scotland’s response, and suggests that the fact that there is no Education Minister on the Sustainable Scotland Cabinet Sub-Committee is the explanation.
Children are required to do active citizenship. There are repeated references to children practising active citizenship in the school, home and community. For example:

Students can act on their decisions by identifying how they might appropriately participate in community issues. They plan and work on environmental improvement projects at home, school and community. (Curriculum Framework, 1998, 270)

The Western Australian Curriculum Framework is supported by seven key principles. The seventh of these is titled: “Collaboration and partnerships” and incorporates a community philosophy into schools:

Education is the shared responsibility of students, teachers, parents, tertiary educators and the community. Successful implementation of the Framework requires a collaborative approach to planning by all concerned and collective responsibility for students’ achievement of the intended outcomes. (Curriculum Council, 1998, 17)

The Western Australian Curriculum Framework is a very significant document in the task of orienting the system towards sustainability. It is community oriented, innovative and forward thinking in content and its outcomes focus enables teachers to choose activities and topics in local areas that are relevant to children's interests and local needs. Its flexibility and general orientation allow sufficient scope for the implementation of EfS. However, in accordance with Agenda 21, it needs to be more strongly oriented towards sustainability in its overarching outcomes, so that a higher priority is accorded to sustainability.

In Western Australia, the Curriculum Framework has a more amenable framework for the cultural discourses of EfS than the draft Environmental Education Strategy or the State Sustainability Strategy, which are oriented towards the narrower aims of environmental education. Through my regular school visits as a teacher educator, I see the Curriculum Framework increasingly being used in schools for purposes related to the EfS agenda, for example active citizenship projects are becoming quite common in the Bunbury Education District. I am beginning to hear teachers say: “I wish to live the Curriculum Framework with my children”, for example Posthumus, 2002. While this is some cause for optimism, teacher implementation of the Curriculum Framework could be improved by improved programs of teacher professional development.  

49 For example, at a recent regional education district professional development day for teachers, ‘change’ was one of four conference themes. The stream seemed to comprise an interesting collection of skills and strategies for change, but contained no purpose for change. There were no future studies, EfS, environmental education, Aboriginal perspectives, global perspectives components, or social critique to frame the skills and strategies or guide the teachers towards reorientation towards sustainability. If
field of complexities and tensions working to stop teachers from fully implementing the Curriculum Framework. These tensions also work against effective community participation in education and stall the implementation of EfS in schools. I detail these shortly.

An extensive range of environmental education materials, kits, programs, services and support are in use in Western Australia. These include AirWatch - a school based air quality program, Waste Wise - a school program focusing on reduced consumption and waste minimization, Ribbons of Blue - a school based water quality program, Water Wise - a water conservation program for schools, Bushrangers - a program involving students in protection of flora and fauna, Greening WA - Adopt-a-Patch, and several programs focusing on remnant vegetation, as well as a great variety of others. There are also several mainly privately funded environmental education centres and environmental education organisations. These programs, centres and activities are not generally designed to facilitate socio-economic and socio-political awareness. Although Waste Wise addresses practical issues around waste, water and electricity consumption, by and large the environmental education programs and kits tend to leave the fundamental and central economic and cultural problem of consumerism completely unaddressed. This is because generally, environmental education programs, policies and strategies are designed according to the narrow definition of environmental education. Australian and Western Australian environmental education and sustainability education policies and strategies need to seriously address the internationally agreed objective of reorientation towards a socially critical understanding of sustainability.

There is a small high quality Ausaid (Commonwealth Government) funded “One World Centre” which functions as an excellent global and development education library and resource centre, offering short term loans and limited professional teacher development. The Centre is open part time hours only, all three staff members are part time, and many Western Australian teachers simply do not know it exists. There is also a range of other programs with a degree of orientation towards sustainability, such as the Asia Education Foundation and Access Asia, as well as Aboriginal Studies, which are Commonwealth and state funded and available in each state. I support the State Sustainability Strategy’s

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this reorientation is not in place, the problem is the naievty of ‘wanting change without changing’ – of reorganising the chairs on the deck of the Titanic.
recommendation of a high level EfS officer\(^{50}\) in the Department of Education, and the position needs to be fully resourced with EfS development officers and offer socially critical sustainability materials, resources and professional development and learning programs for teachers.

In this section I have showed that schools are sites of political and cultural struggle, influenced by the contemporary dominant thinking in society. They have been largely responsive to, and reproductive of society’s economic orientation. Critical thinkers and radicals have influenced educational thinking and have focused attention on the socially transformative purpose of education. However, the educational purpose of attending to relationship with nature has not been considered important since the Romantics and Transcendalists. A study of Australian and Western Australian policies relating to EfS shows that unfortunately, the relationship between education and sustainability is not yet sufficiently developed. The idea of education as a principle of, or process for sustainability is not given sufficient priority in the State Sustainability Strategy. The internal agreement to reorient the education system towards sustainability is not yet part of Western Australia’s planning. The Western Australian Curriculum Framework is commendable however, but needs to give a higher priority to the development of a sustainable future in its overarching outcomes. The community has always been a focus of the radical agenda for social and educational change. I shall now attend to community schooling policies and frameworks, to develop the

### 4.2 Community Schooling

There has been considerable confusion about what community schooling and community education actually is (Townsend, 1994, 122, Minzey and LeTarte 1972, 14-18). In this section, I shall explain the concepts and review Australian and West Australian policies relevant to community participation.

#### 4.2.1 The Concepts of Community Schooling and Community Education

Minzey and LeTarte (1972, 11) write that the difference between community education and community schooling is that community schooling is the delivery system for the

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\(^{50}\) This is in addition to and in support of the system wide reorientation towards sustainability I suggested earlier.
concept of community education. Minzey and LeTarte (1972, 19) put forward the view that community education addresses the education needs of all of the community. The definition aims to include all ages of people from pre-school through school age and into the post-school, life-long learner education requirements. Minzey and LeTarte (1972, 24-29) offer six objectives of community education. These are to develop community programs, promote school-community interaction, coordinate the interaction of community resources, improve the relationship between the various social and governmental agencies involved in the community, identify community problems and needs and develop a process to enable the community to self-actualise.

Minzey and LeTarte assert the importance of process rather than programs, and contextualise the discussion within an overall aim to enable the community bond to be re-established or strengthened. The point of community education is to enable the reconnection of relationships between all community participants. Minzey and LeTarte’s (1972) work is still an important reference in the community education field and underpins Townsend’s (1994) study, which articulated the concept of core-plus education. The core-plus education concept originally arose from the Victorian Education Department’s building policy of a ‘core’ of buildings to be used for a school’s centralised education activities such as administration, library, canteen, art room and multi-purpose room with the ‘plus’ being the classrooms as required by students. Minzey and Townsend developed the concept into an educational one. Townsend wrote:

> The core-plus curriculum, which could be considered as maintaining a core of state-mandated requirements for all students, plus the curriculum determined locally (based on the needs of the children from particular communities), could be expanded to become the core-plus school where the core activity, namely, the education of children, was enhanced by a range of other formal and informal programmes for the community as a whole. The school would become a learning facility for all the members of the community and would be available to them on demand. As Minzey (1981) indicated, a school can be defined in two ways. Either it is a community facility that is sometimes used for the education of children, or it is not a community facility that is sometimes used for the education of children. (1994, 113)

Townsend’s concept of the core-plus school with the maximum possible community education and participation in each aspect of the school’s operation, encapsulates the notion of ‘community school’ which underpins this dissertation. However the term
‘community school’ is often used in a much narrower way to denote community engagement in the children’s education. In this narrow meaning; development of the older or younger non school-aged school community is not yet a consideration of the school. Because the narrower concept has the potential to develop to a fuller notion of a core-plus school through increased community participation and commitment by school staff and community members, I continue to use the term ‘community school’ to cover both of these situations.

In the school community context of participatory democracy, I use the term ‘participation’ in the sense where full empowerment and engagement is enacted through equal partnership in school decision-making. The notion of community participation in education is highly contested. Limerick (1995, 46 - 49) proposes three levels of power which frame volunteer interaction with the school, which are assist, advise or decide. These coincide with involvement (execution of routine activities such as helping in the tuckshop or the classroom), consultation (on decisions which contrive routines such as policy development, for example at the Parents and Citizens meetings or by newsletters) and participation (in decisions which contrive routines such as sitting on curriculum committees or councils). Of these three means of engagement, only participation has equalised power whereby parents are recognised as having a broad range of competencies. I have developed these three notions of participation further in section 8.1 of Appendix Eight.

4.2.2 Community Schooling in Western Australia

In this section I introduce community schooling, before reviewing the political, regulatory and legislative history of participation in decision-making in Australian and Western Australian schools. I review literature to address reasons why participation has not been implemented to capacity in systemic schools. This section is very important to this dissertation, as background for considering whether the research findings from the two small non-systemic schools described in this dissertation are applicable to Western Australian small systemic schools.

Western Australia is well provided with community schools, both systemic and non-systemic. Notable among the non-systemic community schools, are the fifteen Aboriginal Independent Community Schools (AICS) of which Strelley was the first,
officially opening in 1976 (AICS, 2001). The Aboriginal community schools are spread throughout Western Australia, some in remote locations and others in urban areas or rural towns. Each school is autonomous. As an example, Strelley is strongly committed to Aboriginal cultural maintenance and is underpinned by the principle of community control. There are also a wide variety of ‘alternative’ philosophy independent schools in Western Australia, such as Montessori, Steiner, child-centred, family oriented, or those with a strong emphasis on the environment\textsuperscript{51}, each with varying degrees of community engagement in their decision-making and teaching. There are also a variety of schools that cater for particular community groups, such as Muslim and Christian community schools, again with varying degrees of community engagement in decision-making.

In Western Australia, there are now a very wide variety of systemic community schools, including the Education Department’s Remote Community Schools, which are located in remote Aboriginal communities. There are also a large and increasing number of high schools and primary schools across Western Australia which have been set up to function as community schools. These include Glen Huon Primary School, Dalyellup Beach Primary School and Eaton Community College in the Bunbury region and Warnbro Community High School in the outer metropolitan area of Perth. There has also been a research project to evaluate the implementation of local management in twenty Western Australian state schools (Estill \textit{et al.}, 2001). There is also a Local Management of Schools Network and, according to their website in 2001, ninety Western Australian schools have nominated to participate (Education Department of Western Australia, 2001a). Below, I shall overview the concepts of community schooling and community education, which in turn leads to an investigation of the troubled history of the implementation of community schooling and the presentation of issues in need of resolution.

\textbf{4.2.3 Community Participation in Schools: The Policy Frameworks}

A community education philosophy as part of the operations of the school arose in Australia, the USA and the UK almost simultaneously in the 1930s, although in different forms (Townsend, 1994, 121). In England, ‘village colleges’ developed in the

\footnote{For example, the Woodbury-Boston School, in Torbay near Albany, aims to “to provide children with a kind, environmentally whole education” (Woodbury-Boston School, 2001).}
1920s. A 1934 Victorian Department of Education document contained the following position:

It is considered that the schools will do their most satisfactory work when they function as community centres and generally share in community life. (Townsend, 1994, 121)

According to Townsend (1994, 121), the American version began with recreation programs to keep youth active and therefore out of trouble, and moved to catering for the educational needs of the whole community. The expansion of the concept meant that by the 1960s, there was considerable confusion in the field.

Karmel’s (1973) report: “Schools in Australia”, commonly referred to as the Karmel Report, signified the beginning of massive changes in Australian schools in a broad range of areas. In particular, it recommended the devolution of responsibility for government schools to the schools themselves, with increased community involvement in the operation of the school. The Karmel report was underpinned by the conviction that devolution of responsibility for education to school people would make schooling more effective, because the decision makers are those entrusted with the implementation of the decisions. Since then, the local management of schools\(^{52}\) has been associated with the push for school improvement, or school effectiveness (Townsend, 1994). The Karmel Report was followed by repeated ‘restructures’ of the various education departments across Australia, in which re-configurations of relations between the centre (head offices of the education departments) and the periphery (regional offices and schools) took place (Lingard, Knight and Porter, 1995). It is interesting to note that both proponents of restructuring, for example Caldwell (1998, 13) and critiques of its manner of implementation, for example Smyth, W.J. (2001, 184-187) agree that there has never been any claim of a direct link between devolution and improvement in learning outcomes, or the inclusion of an explicit action theory to lead to improved learning.

Western Australia’s 1987 “Better Schools” report exemplifies the movement. As a result of that report, within the framework outlined by the Western Australian Education Department, all Western Australian schools were required to produce their own development plan based upon their own objectives. They were to work from their own ‘single line’ budgets (rather than conform to the previous arrangement of ear-marked

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\(^{52}\) ‘Local management of schools’ is also known as school-based management, school-site management, self-managing schools and school based budgeting (Estill et al., 2001, 15).
funds for particular purposes). Importantly they were to formally create school decision-making groups comprising staff, students, parents and community representatives to authorise budgets and make policy. In addition schools were to be financially and educationally audited by the department, that is, held accountable for their financial and educational outcomes. Correspondingly the central office oriented itself towards a stronger role of policy definition and strategic planning, and school support services were decentralised to the schools or to the regions (Lingard, Knight and Porter, 1995, 83).

Since the 1987 Better Schools Report, which set the agenda for devolution of greater decision-making power to Western Australian schools, a variety of reviews and restructures have been implemented to achieve the objective of local management of schools53. These reviews have resulted in sweeping changes which Estill et al. (2001) have summarised in four categories: Broad Policy Frameworks, Central Management, School Level Management and Curriculum Reform.

**Broad Policy Frameworks**

Within the category of broad policy frameworks is a common emerging vocabulary (for example excellence, quality and school effectiveness). Public sector reforms including contracting out of non-core services, implementation of private sector principles (such as increased competition between schools and private sector resource management) and outcomes reporting to the community, have characterised this category.

The School Education Act 1999 (WA) mandates community participation in Education Department of Western Australia schools. The School Education Act 1999 (WA) section 125 states that, “A government school is to have a council unless it is exempted by the minister under section 126” (Government of Western Australia, 1999). Section

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127 specifies the membership of the council, which is to comprise parents\(^5\), other members of the general community, school staff and the principal. It stipulates that parents and other members of the community form the majority on the council. Section 128 prescribes the functions which are to take part in setting objectives, priorities and policy directions, financial decisions, evaluating school performance, school promotion in the community, formulating student codes of conduct, dress codes, and other functions according to regulations such as consultation about prayers and songs. Section 131 sets the limits of the council role. The council may not intervene in educational instruction, school control or management, or management or operation of the school funds. (That is, its role is limited to policy development rather than implementation.) It has no authority over teaching staff. My interpretation is that the spirit of the act is about community participation in decision-making about the policies and activities of the school and in reviews about their outcomes for educational and social improvement. That is, community participation is now a mandatory part of Western Australian Education Department schools.

**Central Management**

There has been ongoing restructuring aimed at the provision of relevant key educational services and a leaner, tighter central office responsible for high level functions such as educational frameworks, policies, standards and quality control outcomes. Also there is now a flatter central office decision-making structure and a district structure designed to strengthen local support for schools.

The Western Australian Education Department has established a Local Management of Schools Network (LMSN) which is available to all government schools. Its aim is “school improvement through local decision-making, parent involvement and community engagement” (Education Department of Western Australia, 2001a). Its role is to “recognise, share and promote the success of government schools in engaging their communities and implementing local initiatives to support student learning” (ibid.). The Western Australian LMSN web-site reported the then Director-General, Peter Browne, as saying that parents have to be nurtured after one hundred years of being disenfranchised (Education Department of Western Australia, 2001a). Before

\(^5\)Other than where the majority of the students are eighteen years of age or older.
nominating to participate with the LMSN, schools must consult widely with each of their decision-making committees and groups. To date more than ninety schools have nominated to participate, which I consider to be a very encouraging trend.

**School Management**

At the school management level there is substantially increased devolution of decision-making power and financial responsibility and autonomy together with increased participative and consultative work practices. A diversity of school types has emerged in response to community needs. In addition there is increased community involvement such as the creation of school decision-making groups and increased school flexibility to meet local needs. There is also increased accountability and leadership obligations for school principals, together with increased focus on accountability and effective administration, introduction of school plans, school based performance management and professional development.

**Curriculum Reform**

In the category of curriculum reform there is an increased focus on student learning outcomes; outcomes based assessment together with accountability to government and community, and a common reporting framework across all schools (Estill *et al.*, 2001). The Western Australian Curriculum Framework is supported by seven key principles, the seventh of which incorporates a community philosophy for schools.

The emphasis in all Australian states is now on:

...self-governing, self-managing or self-determining schools, school-based decision-making and school based curriculum development (but within national frameworks) (Lingard, Knight and Porter, 1995, 84).

The point of this section has been to illustrate that Western Australian state schools have the potential for extensive community engagement in education (according to policy, at least). At the policy level, the shift from business-as-usual towards sustainability seems to have commenced. However there remains a deep structural contradiction, which acts against sustainability by orienting schools towards the economy. I shall consider the extent and potential of community engagement in schools in the study of two school communities in this dissertation and particularly in the
conclusion. In the next section, I shall review the small school literature to determine the significance of school size for a transformative agenda.

4.3 Small Schools Movements

At least until the second world war, 90.1% of American schools were small schools with six or fewer teachers and 52.8% of all schools were one-room buildings (Wofford, 1946, 3). Wofford wrote that at the time, this was one of the largest educational problems in the U.S.A., with significant implications for the democratic system of life, because: grades one to eight in the one class were difficult to teach; because teachers in small, usually rural schools were generally inexperienced; and because two in every five teachers in small schools changed schools each year. Wofford (1946) considered that many of the problems facing teachers of small schools did not occur in schools with six or more teachers (ibid.). At the time of publication of Wofford’s book, two thousand schools failed to open due to teachers working in the war effort, leaving a lack of qualified staff to operate schools. Cotton (1996, 1) writes that between 1940 and 1990, there was a 69% decline in the total number of elementary and secondary public schools in the US, although there was a 70% increase in population. In 1996, the average school enrolment in the US was 653 students, with enrolments of 2,000 to 3,000 being commonplace (Cotton, 1996, 1).

The Small Schools Movement in the USA and the Human Scale Education (HSE) Movement in the UK propound a huge volume of literature which supports the view that small schools provide a better education. As per Schumacher, the HSE movement claims that people are better in small, comprehensible groups (Carnie, 2001).

Today, we suffer from an almost universal idolatry of giantism. It is therefore necessary to insist on the virtues of smallness – where this applies….For every activity there is a certain appropriate scale…(Schumacher, 1973, 54-5)

What is the meaning of democracy, freedom, human dignity, standard of living, self-realisation, fulfilment? Is it a matter of goods or people? Of course it is a matter of people. But people can only be themselves in small comprehensible groups. Are there not indeed enough ‘signs of the times’ to indicate that a new start is needed? (Schumacher, 1973, 62)
The movements connect groups and networks with a broad range of interests. Large numbers of groups of small schools proponents have recently emerged in response to the critique of the school efficiency movement which amalgamates small and middle size schools into large schools to capitalise on economies of scale. In the words of Smyth and Shacklock, the school efficiency movement aims:

…to make schools more like industry, with heavy doses of effective, clearly focused, narrowly utilitarian objectives… in order to produce the highest quality and most saleable product (1998, 45).

According to the proponents of small schools, school amalgamation and the creation of large schools simply is not efficient, in that larger schools do not provide higher educational standards and they cause greater inequity, lower school retention rates and they are uneconomical (Irmsher, 1997, 1, 2). This conclusion is not universally supported, however. Australian research involving nearly five thousand year twelve students from 44 Catholic High Schools in NSW could not demonstrate a clear link between school size and quality of school life. Mok and Flynn (1997, 11) could only conclude that:

…from students’ nominations of preferred school characteristics, the quality of interpersonal relationship was given the most significant attention. Schools with warm staff-student and student-student relationships, good school discipline, high teaching and learning standards, varied and relevant curricula are viewed favourably by students.

From the perspective of small schools advocates, the Australian study is problematic in that the researchers did not define ‘small’. Mok and Flynn chose a sample of schools, and then investigated whether the smaller schools rated more highly on a Quality of School Life (QSL) scale originally devised by Williams and Batten. They indicated that the smallest school had two hundred and thirty four students, whilst the largest had one thousand, two hundred and seventy four. The mean and median school sizes were seven hundred and fifty nine and seven hundred and sixty nine. Within the small schools literature, there is still debate as to what constitutes ‘small’ (Raywid, 1999, 2). Raywid states that one association set ‘small’ as less than three hundred and fifty students for elementary schools and five hundred for high schools. This number has the agreement of Cotton (1996, 3) who reviewed 69 different studies which investigated the relative
merits of school size. However, the fifteen schools which are members of the Human Scale Education Movement in England have enrolments from six to sixty (HSE, 2002). Therefore, the Australian study is inconclusive in that the HSE interpretation of ‘small’ was not addressed in the research at all. Unfortunately, there is not yet a universally accepted interpretation of ‘small’.

There are a variety of ideologies which currently support the small schools movement, for philosophically different and sometimes diametrically opposed goals. Reducing the size of schools is being promulgated as the panacea for most identified educational ailments from low standards of achievement to violence in schools. For example, Vander Ark (2001, 1) argues for smaller schools because they demonstrate higher educational standards, while others support the concept because it is more supportive of the concept of a holistic learning community (such as Carnie, 2001). I am convinced by the literature that small size is one correlate of a good school. Bigger is definitely not better.

Cotton (1996, 3) reviewed literature showing that students in small schools participate in a greater number of extracurricular activities than do those in larger schools. Further, they were more likely to hold positions of importance and to feel satisfaction from participating. She writes that curriculum quality is generally equivalent between small schools and large ones and cost effectiveness is not necessarily greater in larger schools, because this depends upon the nature of the community. According to Cotton, (1996, 5) small schools show higher academic achievement for children of ethnic minorities and low socioeconomic status, and these children show a better attitude than those in larger schools. She says that small schools have less negative social behaviour than large schools. Further, attendance is better in small schools, with small schools having less drop outs.

Cotton (1996, 2 – 36) completed a substantial review of small school literature and concludes that there is a greater sense of community and belonging among students in small schools, and personal and academic self-concept are stronger. She writes that teacher-student relationships are better at small schools, and teacher attitudes and morale are higher in small schools (ibid.). A later study by Lawrence et al (2002) shows
that if the social cost of failed students is factored into large school accounting, this makes them most uneconomical. They say that the negative effects of large schools on community members, students and teachers reflect “diseconomies of scale” inherent in large schools. Further, small schools can definitely be built cost effectively. In short:

Good small schools serve students, and those who care about them, better than large schools… [T]here are many economic arguments in support of small schools, and … it is fiscally responsible to spend school construction dollars on small school facilities. (Lawrence et al, 2002, 1)

Carnie (2001, 29, 30) writes that scale in education is critical to children's education. She writes that children can only be valued as children and teachers are only able to know children well in smaller structures. This means smaller classes and schools, or larger schools restructured into smaller units. According to Carnie, the HSE movement advocates that the development of confidence is a necessary precondition to learning, which is only possible in an environment in which they feel supported and secure. A school underpinned by these principles and within the context of community and the local environment, is best placed to enable children to develop their relationship with the world (Carnie, 2001, 29). Community projects are also likely to be more effective as learning opportunities if kept small. For example:

Because we live in a culture that only values Olympic scale initiatives, which are impossible for most of us to be involved in, we should make a special effort to emphasise the importance of small, meaningful projects that one can guarantee to carry through to completion. (Hill, 1999, 131, emphasis given)

Walker (2001, 32-4) writes that small (non-systemic) schools such as Small School and King Alfred School teach optimum resource use through their creative and practical emphasis, being forerunners of EfS before the term was invented. Small community schools which are intentionally culturally and ecologically embedded, which focus on the development of themselves as learning communities through participative decision making and which address the various criteria and critiques referred to in this section, could be subject to the critique that they are overly parochial and inward looking and fail to engage in issues beyond the personal and local. This historical critique by public schoolers to the various community school movements has been addressed in a variety of ways. Firstly, in Australia and the UK curriculum frameworks provide nationally
determined educational outcomes. As from 2004 in Western Australia, all students must demonstrate outcomes consistent with the Western Australian Curriculum Framework. A number of the thirteen overarching outcomes pertain to this critique, especially number nine:

Students interact with people and cultures other than their own and are equipped to contribute to the global community (Curriculum Council, 1998).

To address the criticism that this can only be propositional knowledge rather than experiential or practical knowledge, many small schools network with other small schools – in nearby districts and globally – to seek solutions. Ideas such as travelling specialist staff, staff network conferences and visits, Internet inquiry projects and student email buddies combined with excursions to other schools in different educational regions are regularly implemented (for example Nainby, nd; personal experience). On the other hand, it is important to defend the schools that are successful in enabling their learners to reclaim a sense of place, local culture, history and organic community, which responds tacitly to the situations and aspirations of members. Surely these are indicators of progress towards sustainability.

**Chapter Summary**

I used the work of education critics and philosophers to show that schools in Australia are oriented towards economic development rather than sustainability, which goes some way towards answering the question of why we do not have sustainability already. I showed the uneasy place of schooling in the north, and highlighted contesting expectations about the purpose of education systems together with our problematic understanding of nature. I critiqued the Western Australian State Sustainability Strategy, arguing that its incorporation of education is seriously deficient. As UNESCO (2002b, 4, 7) writes, learning is an integral part of sustainable development and therefore education must be part of state sustainability strategies and action plans. I commended the Western Australian Curriculum Framework and suggested that it be reoriented towards sustainability in its overarching outcomes. An important point that I have emphasised in this chapter is that schooling is always political in hegemonic, ideological and practical ways. Accordingly, schools that are not oriented towards sustainability unavoidably authorise unsustainability as the status quo. In my view this
should be conscious, explicit knowledge for teachers, parents and children because through their activities, they construct a sustainable or an unsustainable future.

I have shown that schools reproduce society through their model of experience. Therefore, socially transformative schools will need to deeply engage with society at the local community level, for reciprocally transformative action. Accordingly, education will need serious rethinking. Structural changes will need to be made firstly to de-articulate the school-economy nexus and secondly to focus on learning sustainability. In Western Australia, since the State Sustainability Strategy does not allocate significance to education, political action will be needed to address this.

I reviewed literature demonstrating that policy trends in Australia and Western Australia support community engagement in public education. Because of its potential for a participative community culture-learning approach for sustainability, I regard community schooling as a legitimate part of EfS. I showed that smallness is now widely regarded in the literature as one attribute of a good school because of its potential for social learning, community development and children’s sense of belonging. Proponents of small schools such as the English Human Scale Education Movement argue that small schools have the capacity for sustainability and functioned sustainably before the term EfS was invented. In the following chapter I look more closely at the notion of participation while defining the research paradigm and methodology commensurate with the transformative task of this dissertation. I shall elaborate on the participative research approach used to investigate the communities of two small schools.
CHAPTER FIVE - RESEARCH PARADIGM AND METHODOLOGY

I use the participatory approach in this research because of its potential for transformative learning towards sustainability. The participatory approach detailed by Heron (1996) which is used in this research, is within the worldview of mind-matter integration. Reason (2000) describes three competing worldviews, which are: mainly about matter (mechanistic, underpins the technocratic discourses of sustainability); mainly about mind and spirit; and mind-matter integration (relational, underpins radical ecology). In describing the contribution of the mind-matter integration worldview, Reason says it:

Provides for a re-enchantment of the world and an honouring of the rights of the more than human. [It] [c]hallenges us to discover a new form of knowing and methodologies which honour the integration of mind-matter and politics with epistemology. (Reason, 2000)

Many qualitative researchers articulate the need for an incorporation of the spiritual dimension with the scientific (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). Two major problems with enlightenment science, says Berman (1981, 151) are that it lacks participation, and it lacks the admission that it involves participating consciousness at all. He argues that the Cartesian paradigm is really a fraud, and that the illness of our era is not just the lack of participation, but the wilful denial of the body and experience in cognition. He suggests that the mind/body dichotomy that underpins the mechanical causality understanding of perception should be classed as: “impaired reality testing” because if emotional/visceral responses are not included, it is unscientific by virtue of omission (1981, 178, 186).

I shall situate the participatory approach. Lather (1992, 89, 96) describes a “post-paradigmatic diaspora” which refers to “the proliferation of discursive frameworks for understanding contemporary social inquiry as well as to the incommensurability of these frameworks”. Epistemologically, methodologically and in terms of common research methods, the participatory approach is a comfortable inclusion within the critical paradigm. However, ontologically there is some room for discussion. The critical paradigm sees a reality ‘out there’ which is independent of us and which is material (Fien, 2002, 249, Guba and Lincoln, 1994, 108, 109). Advocates of a participative approach emphasise the radical interdependence and deep ‘interbeing’ of
all phenomena and all beings because of a holistic, systems view of the world. Nothing exists alone or independently. Dependent co-arising, according to Macy (1991, 1, 18), is the vision that underlies the Buddhist understanding of the human predicament, that is, that phenomena affect each other mutually and reciprocally. She says:

In this doctrine, reality appears as a dynamically interdependent process. All factors, mental and physical, subsist in a web of mutual causal interaction, with no element or essence held to be immutable or autonomous. (1991, 18)

In this view, reality is a process of continual participative creation.

This position would generally be supported by radical ecologists. I do not believe all critical theorists would reject it, for example Carr and Kemmis say that truth and action are socially constructed (1986, 182). The critical research paradigm’s ontology can, I believe, be broadened to be inclusive of these elements of the participative approach. Guba and Lincoln (1994, 109, 110) indicate considerable fusion between matters of ontology and epistemology in the emancipatory paradigm, because the paradigm challenges the traditional separation between them. Heron (1996) and Reason (1994) specifically describe an extended epistemology within the participatory approach. Sterling seems to include ontology with epistemology when he suggests the following:

[Transformative education] requires the elaboration of a lived sustainable education paradigm which includes, but goes far beyond curriculum, to embrace and suggest a new participative epistemology (2001, 19, emphasis given).

Therefore, I first outline my understanding of a broad, participative and holistic ontology within the context of its fusion with an epistemology of deep interconnectedness.

### 5.1 A Holistic, Relational Ontology and a Participative Epistemology

Guba and Lincoln (1994, 108) write the ontology question:

What is the form of nature and reality and, therefore, what is there that can be known about it?

I shall examine how perceiving ourselves and nature as a relational process, constantly being recreated, sets up a holistic ontology which is a key to the education process and
to my research.

In participative research, ontologically everything exists in relation and is underpinned by notions of interdependence, interbeing and dependent co-arising. Heron writes:

> In terms of perceiving, the perceiver is inseparable from, but not identical with, the perceptual process of imaging in visual, auditory, tactile and kinaesthetic terms. This imaging process is inseparable from, but not identical with, the given which it images and enacts. Thus through perceptual imaging, the perceiver participates in the given, or, to put it crudely, in the world ('crudely' because strictly speaking the world is not the given but how the perceiver participates in the given). (1996, 116)

Participation is a defining attribute of perception (Abram, 1996, 57). Heron writes, "reality is the fruit of the active participation and construing of the mind in what is given" (1996, 116). As Reason (n.d.) writes: "knowing doesn’t reside in the knower, nor does truth in what is known, but in-between". This is the insight of interbeing (Nhat Hanh, 1995) or inter-existence. These insights show that research, theorising and practice are inseparable aspects of the creative process. Any attempt to separate them will result in a diminishing of each. I have explained the holistic, relational ontology which underpins my research within the emancipatory paradigm because of its fusion with a participative epistemology which is characteristic of the critical/emancipatory paradigm (Fien, 2002, 249) and because emancipatory researchers accept an ontology of social constructivism (eg. Carr and Kemmis, 1986, 182).

Guba and Lincoln (1994, 108), in writing of epistemology, recognise the dependence of this on the answer given on ontology:

> What is the nature of the relationship between the knower or would-be knower and what can be known? The answer to this question is constrained by the answer already given to the ontological question; that is, not just any relationship can now be postulated.

The epistemology of my research involves elaborating the concepts of interdependence and interbeing. Independence is a political rather than a scientific term, because interdependence is the condition of life. Interdependence means that all members of a community derive their essence and their very existence through their relationships to other members (Capra, 1997, 287, 290). Disconnected, abstract thinking\(^{56}\) has

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\(^{56}\) A reliance on disconnected, abstracted thinking commits Wilber’s category error of the ‘eye’ of reason usurping the role of the other ‘eyes’ (1996, 5-10). These are the eye of the flesh (science), the eye of reason (philosophy-psychology) and the eye of contemplation (religion-mysticism). These eyes correspond to the major realms of the perennial philosophers, being the gross (flesh...
encouraged the belief that humans exist separately from each other and nature, a belief underpinning the ecological and social crises we now face. Full humanity implies connectedness with the web of life (Capra, 1997, 288). Berman suggests that holism is a biological imperative through the memories of childhood and lived experience which are stored in the body. He says:

In the last analysis, we cannot avoid the conviction that everything really is related to everything else (1981, 172).

5.1.1 Reality is Constantly Being Created and Recreated

Reality is constantly being created and recreated, and knowledge is explicitly manifested through creative, on-going thought processes (Capra, 1997, 264). Knowing is an action by the knower, which depends upon the structure of the knower: “rooted in the very manner of his living being, in his organisation” (Maturana and Varela, 1987, 34; emphasis given). Therefore, a ‘world’ is brought forth with every act of knowing: “All doing is knowing, and all knowing is doing” (ibid. 26). We ‘bring forth our selves’ through intersubjective agreement about reality, for example during cooperative research and participative decision-making in community.

I shall distinguish between primary and secondary meaning. Objective science has placed importance on secondary, linguistic meanings of phenomena. The primary realm is that of direct, unmediated experience which is local and culturally specific while the secondary realm is that of linguistic concepts which is dependent upon the primary realm. Perception is participation, in that when we perceive, we participate in the realm of primary, unmediated, direct experience using our learned concepts and cognitive structures to create our reality. Our concepts are always subject to revision as our experiences in the realm of the primary constantly lead us to revise our elaborations. Abram (1996, 34) comments that the “merely subjective” (my emphasis) has come to be seen as a secondary realm, a consequence of the ‘more real’ world of quantifiable ‘facts’. Abram (1996, 34), Wilber (1996, 220 – 227) and Capra (1997, 278 - 283) see this as an inversion of reality and therefore as intensely problematic.

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57 This idea has been elaborated in several different ways. For example Booth (1988, 7, 24-25) differentiates between the holistic and the discrete, in which ‘holistic’ relates to the context and ‘discrete’ is the meanings. Differing discrete articulations create multiplicities. Any reality can only ever be partially represented due to the nature of making it communicable.
5.1.2 Cognition

We are embodied in re-cognition. Cognition, according to Capra (1997, 260) is the process of life. Maturana and Varela characterise cognition as:

An effective action, an action that will enable a living being to continue its existence in a definite environment as it brings forth its world (1987, 30).

It is not a process of representation of an independently living world. Rather, it is the creating of a ‘world’. These insights come from living systems theories and involve a radical expansion of the concepts of mind and cognition. In this view, acts of cognition are constituted by structural changes in the system which are triggered by the environment. Capra (1997, 261) explains that cognition encompasses two kinds of inextricably linked activities, being the ‘bringing forth of a world’ and the maintenance of autopoiesis\textsuperscript{58}. According to this understanding of cognition, as organisms increase in complexity, so does their cognitive capacity.

As well as the already existing coupling with its environment, as a certain level of complexity is reached, the organism couples structurally with itself. Reflection is the process of:

knowing how we know… a process of turning back upon ourselves.

...[We] recognise that the certainties and knowledge of others are, respectively, as overwhelming and tenuous as our own. (Varela and Maturana, 1987, 24)

In the case of humans, the structural coupling within self is the inner world which links thought, language and consciousness (Capra, 1997, 262). In paradoxical cases this iterative re-coupling is ‘reflexivity’: to reveal the self-exemplifying character of knowledge (Ashmore, 1989, 3). Language development facilitates self-awareness through conceptual description and reflection. Abstract thought, symbols and mental representations allow reflective consciousness so that we “bring forth ourselves” when we are aware of how we know, while ‘bringing forth a world’. In this way, consciousness can only be understood in the social context in which it is embedded. ‘Consciousness’ comes from root words which mean ‘knowing together’, which means that consciousness is a social phenomenon (Capra, 1997, 282). This understanding of cognition enables us to see that it is important to remain structurally coupled with the

\textsuperscript{58} Autopoiesis literally means ‘self-making’, and refers to the self-organising capacity of systems (Capra, 1997, 97).
environment as well as with ourselves. An emphasis on the conceptual, inner realm to the neglect of the environment leads to the bringing forth of an unbalanced world.

There is no objectively existing knowledge to be known about, rather it is our own cognitive structures which shape and form our perceptions of the world. Similarly, knowledge is actively and intentionally generated (Polanyi, 1978, vii). Experiential knowing is that internal meaning born of the experiential depths through active engagement, which is evident in the feeling and meeting of a person, energy, being, process, action or other thing (Heron, 1996, 33, 53). Polanyi writes it this way:

We should know well the joy of seeing things; the curiosity aroused by novel objects; the straining of our senses to make out what it is that we see. ...I believe we should acknowledge these sensory actions as proper strivings which we both share and rely on. (1978, 98)

As I see it, experiential knowing is tacit (but not all tacit knowledge\(^{59}\) is experiential). It is the source of primary, holistic meaning.

On the basis of experiential knowing, presentational knowing is perhaps verbal, musical or artistic, representing the grasp of envisaged patterns inherent in the experience. It is imaginal. Artistic, imaginal forms of presentation enable the person some disengagement from their lived experience so that they do not overly identify with it (like the preconceptual child). With this disengagement, the person can participate in the experience more deeply to enlighten the tacit primary meaning of the experience. The symbolism of art is possibly one of the most unhindered, dynamic ways of evoking the empathic-imaginal experience-with, or co-experiencing of our world (Heron, 1996, 182, 183). Presentational knowing is still holistic, not yet reduced to the discrete.

The participative epistemology affirms only multiple subjectivities, rather than any objectivity, because it is our own cognitive structures that shape and form our perceptions of the world. Capra says:

There are no objectively existing structures, there is no pregiven territory of which we can make a map - the map making itself brings forth the features of the territory. (1997, 264)

This means that there are only subjectivities, each making their maps by which they bring forth their worlds.

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\(^{59}\) As Berman (1981, 180) writes it, non-discursive knowledge has cognitive content.
The “real world” in which we find ourselves… is … an intertwined matrix of sensations and perceptions, a collective field of experience lived through many different angles. The mutual inscription of others in my experience, and (as I must assume) of myself in their experiences, effects the interweaving of our individual phenomenal fields into a single, ever-shifting fabric, a single phenomenal world or “reality”.
(Abram, 1996, 39)

5.1.3 Critical Subjectivity and Intersubjectivity

It is by agreement that we each share meaning and subjectivity. The study of subjectivity has been highly contested (Mansfield, 2000, 11). The subject, according to Mansfield (2000, 185), is the term used to describe selfhood, or interior life, especially as it is used in relationship to culture and politics, gender, power and language. The subjective view then, is the view from the self, which potentially incorporates relationships of culture and politics, gender, power and language. Phenomenologists contend that objective science has consistently overlooked our direct, everyday experience of the lifeworld, which is necessarily subjective. Abram says:

The everyday world in which we hunger and make love is hardly the mathematically determined “object” toward which the sciences direct themselves. Despite all the mechanical artifacts that now surround us, the world in which we find ourselves before we set out to calculate and measure it is not an inert or mechanical object but a living field, an open and dynamic landscape subject to its own moods and metamorphoses. My life and the world’s life are deeply intertwined. (Abram, 1996, 32, 33)

Therefore there are no value-free positions because we are subjectively drawn to a particular aspect in the first place, even if one takes a supposedly disinterested or objective attitude towards it.

Critical subjectivity, in the words of Reason, is:

A quality of awareness in which we do not suppress our primary subjective experience; nor do we allow ourselves to be overwhelmed and swept along by it; rather we raise it to consciousness and use it as part of the inquiry process. (1988, 12)

Critical subjectivity builds upon the notion of intersubjectivity first put forward by Husserl in responding to the critiques of solipsism following his writing about the world as subjective and experienced as a mental phenomenon. Intersubjectivity is an interpretation of the world which facilitates the description of phenomena as they are experienced by many different selves or subjects (Abram, 1996, 38). Abram explains
the “experienced solidity” which is sustained by continual encounter with other embodied subjects as centres of experience (1996, 39). Continual encounters with other perceivers assures us of the fact that there is more than what we each can perceive at any one time. Intersubjectivity assures us of multiple views on a thing. It is a sharing of our subjectivities so that the agreement provides phenomenological validity, relegating the Cartesian version of disinterested objectivity to that of a theoretical construction employed in the intersubjective experience.

Intersubjectivity forms a group consensus of the subjectivities arising from the embodied, sensuous experiences of individuals. The sharing of the phenomena is necessarily linguistic in form, whilst the subjectivity is our own individual experience of the phenomenon. Heron uses the believing/knowing distinction to elaborate this. Heron explains that when declared to myself, the subjective phenomenon is belief, but when others agree through intersubjective participation, it is tentative knowing (Heron, 1996, 175). Critical intersubjectivity is process oriented and I will return to this concept with the discussion of methodology, below. For the moment, note that truth values can only be found intersubjectively. The holistic, relational ontology, the epistemology of interconnectedness and intersubjectivity form the basis of a methodology of and for community.

5.2 A Methodology of and for Community

If there are no value-free positions, methods for inquiry require an ethical base. It is clear that methods no longer form the basis for methodology:

How can the inquirer (would-be knower) go about finding out whatever he or she believes can be known? … The methodological question cannot be reduced to a question of methods; methods must be fitted to a predetermined methodology. (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, 108)

Harding (1987, 3) writes that methodology is:

a theory and analysis of how research does or should proceed; it includes accounts of how “the general structure of theory finds its application in particular scientific disciplines.” For example, discussions of how functionalism (or Marxist political economy, or phenomenology) should be or is applied in particular research areas are methodological analyses.

Harding’s broader perspective explains how methodology links the research paradigm (critical and emancipatory, in the case of this research) to its application. In order to go
about the research, the transformative human inquiry researcher applies the ontology of reality as participatory process and the epistemology of profound interdependence in constructing forms of participative, elaborative (ethical) practices for communities. To develop this, I detail Heron’s modes of knowing. Once we articulate the linguistic nature of interconnectedness between humans and nature, and between humans and humans, skills for transformative human inquiry are communicated and a base for transformative education is formed.

5.2.1 Preconceptual, Conceptual and Post Conceptual Modes of Knowing

According to Heron (1996, 181), the preconceptual world is that of children before their capacity to speak has emerged. It is an “immediate identification with lived experience”, a level of participation which is unawakened by language. The conceptual world is that which emerges with the capacity for language. Language enables us to separate from the world of primary experience, because we can then conceptualise and revise our concepts in abstraction. On the other hand, language also enables us to relate to the primary world with intention and depth. As many deep ecologists and transformative theorists have pointed out, a large part of the problem of our business-as-usual life-way is its isolation and hyper-separation from nature, effectively removing direct experience from language and concepts.

Our primordial, direct experiencing of the phenomena is inherently synaesthetic, the intertwining of our sensory modalities (Abram, 1996, 59). This has only become unusual to us if we have become estranged from our direct experience (due to the conceptual, rational nature of the business-as-usual culture). Perception includes the pulsating, carnal field of the sensuous body, encouraging an awareness of the living landscape in which we are embedded. Abram writes:

As we return to our senses, we gradually discover our sensory perceptions to be simply our part of a vast, interpenetrating webwork of perceptions and sensations borne by countless other bodies – supported, that is, not just by ourselves, but by icy streams tumbling down granitic slopes, by owl wings and lichens, and by the unseen, imperturbable wind. (1996, 65)

The biosphere is experienced or “lived from within”, by the intelligent body. The attentive, perceiving human animal is fully a part of the world that he/she experiences.
The degree of perception and integration illustrated by Abram is what I understand by Heron’s postconceptual realm. In this realm, the use of concepts is always being revised and transcended, elaborated and mediated by the experiential depths of primary meaning. The postconceptual realm can be seen as a basis for the participative approach, so I shall develop it more fully through a discussion of propositional and practical forms of knowing. This will complete the four stage process of knowing commenced in the section on ontology, and will set the scene for a discussion on the methodological process of knowing.

5.2.2 Propositional and Practical Knowing

Heron considers four main forms of knowing, being experiential, presentational, propositional and practical. In Heron’s (1996) terms, propositional knowing reduces the holistic (the experiential and the presentational) to the discrete - to streams of propositions based upon but removed from the prior two more intimate forms of knowing. Conceptual frameworks enable the revealing, elaborating and celebrating of the primary meaning of experience. Their cognitive mobility enables them to be adapted, moved around and fitted over primary or other conceptual meaning, which is precisely the problem. Conceptual frameworks can enable us to treat the secondary, limited world they represent as the whole reality, when it is not. Polanyi illustrates the problem of language as that of a small map which magnifies a thousand times the original input of information, as well as the number of questions one could ask and answer from the map.

Much less can we control in advance the myriads of arrangements in which nouns, adjectives, verbs and adverbs can be meaningfully combined to form new affirmations or questions, thus developing... the meanings of the words themselves ever further in these new contexts. Verbal speculation may therefore reveal an inexhaustible fund of true knowledge and new substantial problems, just as it may also produce pieces of mere sophistry. (Polanyi, 1978, 95, my emphasis)

Propositional knowledge can obscure the primary meaning so that we feel separate, isolated and anxious (Heron, 1996, 182).

Practical knowledge is a solution to the problem of propositional knowledge because it is the outcome of the process of intersubjective cycling of experiential, presentational

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8 Synaesthesia is defined by Abram (1996, 60) as “the overlap and blending of the senses”.
and propositional knowledge, which honours and elaborates primary meaning. After circuits of processing and on the basis of a solid, well grounded consummation of the experiential, presentational and propositional knowledge, practical knowledge is the epitome, the 'embedded knowing why/how' to exercise a skill, a new, different and deeply founded knowing which incorporates the tacit, the imaginal and the articulate. It reveals, elaborates and celebrates primary, experiential meaning. Polanyi writes it as follows:

… [E]ndorsement of our native powers of making sense of our experience according to our own standards of rationality should also make it possible for us to acknowledge the ubiquitous contributions made by sense perception to the tacit components of articulate knowledge. And, eventually, it should duly condition our manner of acknowledging truth in its articulate forms. (1978, 98, my emphasis)

It is the basis of emancipated social practice and is the basis of a postconceptual world in which the use of concepts is continuously self-transcending.

In Heron’s postconceptual worldview, the self-system is continuously reaching out expansively, integrating experience and empathic imagination, to reframe its concepts subject to the claims of a deeper vision of the world. Its cycling, together with the reflective nature of propositional knowledge, enables the retention of the benefits of ethical, political and scientific thinking in continuously revised forms. Heron says: “It is a world borne by an ever-expanding intentional re-enactment of the origin of language” (1996, 183). Humanistic psychologists recognise the postconceptual realm to be akin to Maslow’s psychological stage of self actualisation (Wilber, 1996, 247). Wilber describes a higher order capacity to synthesise as a fully integrated person with a harmonious body-mind, so that networks of creative relationships can be envisioned. Note that this is significantly different to the normal business-as-usual way of relating to people and nature. By examining the process of elaborating propositional knowledge out of more holistic experiencing, people become transformed and/or freer (emancipated) from the grip of propositional structures. Booth and Rodgers (2000, 82) describe a related idea, calling it ‘postdisciplinary’, which they liken to a dance learned and executed by a team in synchrony. Booth and Rodgers emphasise the tacit and emergent however, whereas postconceptuality keeps the propositional eye cyclically engaged with the experiential, presentational and practical, aiming to continuously reframe concepts for a processual transformation of the world as it is brought forth.
5.2.3 Critical Intersubjectivity

Heron (1996, 184) draws attention to the linguistic (secondary) conception of primary, non-linguistic meanings. The secondary conceptions can distort and hold the distorted meanings, causing a 'rhetoric-reality gap'. This means that intersubjectivity is potentially weak, in that there is no guarantee of its good grounding in the primary meaning that it intends to conceptualise. This can happen through separation of people from each other, and from nature, resulting in concepts and abstractions that are not based upon primary meaning or experience. Critical intersubjectivity is Heron’s solution to this problem. Using the range of radical inquiry skills and the process of cooperative inquiry to cycle action and reflection, researching creates propositional and practical knowledge, elaborating practices in the endeavour to create a postconceptual world. Radical inquiry skills facilitate critical subjectivity by engaging human subjectivity with the focus of an inquiry, thereby increasing the validity of the inquiry. I have listed Heron’s radical inquiry skills as a glossary in Appendix Four.

5.2.4 Knowledge Creates and is About Reality Simultaneously

I shall problematise the notions of knowledge and knowing, because the imposition of unfounded 'knowledge' causes injustice. Polanyi illustrates this as follows:

If, and only if, we believe in witches may we burn people as witches; if, and only if, we believe in God will we build churches; if we believe in master races may we exterminate Jews and Poles…(1978, 113)

Much of the 'knowledge' we learned in school was problematic. For example I was taught that Australian history began when the English came to an empty land in 1770, a position which legitimated the coloniser’s domination of Aboriginal people. Much of the 'knowledge' that underpins the business-as-usual paradigm has integrity problems in that it is often associated with power derived from concepts of patriarchy, hierarchy, class and nature, and derived in abstraction from primary experience.

As was described above, knowledge is always subjective, never disinterestedly objective, and what counts as knowledge depends upon the human observer and the

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61 Critical educators and theorists repeatedly draw attention to the ‘rhetoric-reality’ gap, and search for ways to close it. For example, Simon (1992) proposes ‘teaching against the grain’ as a pedagogy of possibility for enabling emancipation from oppression and domination in a society supposedly founded on freedom and liberation. Fien (1993) describes the gap in the practice of environmental education and proposes a dialectical perspective on the function of agency and structure in the production of human action for a language of possibility.
process of knowing. That is, knowing is always contextually interconnected and dependent, especially as it occurs in an educational context.

If everything is connected to everything else, how can we ever hope to understand anything?

Capra (1997, 40) gives as a solution to this question, the notions of approximate, or tentative knowledge and of process thinking. Systems thinking is always process thinking because in systems science, it is underlying processes that cause the manifestation of structures. Critical inquiry as a re-cognising system has process thinking as it’s sine-qua-non, as its educational imperative.

5.2.5 Transformative Practice

In at least one Aboriginal language, instead of one word for 'know' there is a series of words, each with a graded strength of knowing. There is a word for belief, possibly on the basis of being told by someone. A stronger word, perhaps, for knowing on the basis of observing it once and a stronger one still for experience of the action. Another even stronger word for multiple experiences of an action, perhaps when it is a regular practice. A greatly increased 'strength' of knowledge exists in the word for knowing on the basis of reflection about the action, perhaps after the actor has danced or drawn it or discussed it with a council of elders so that it had become embedded in story linked to landscape. The highest form of knowledge is the elder who has had a lifetime of experience and reflection on the action, which is embedded into story, land, clan, culture and person. With these graded forms of knowing, speakers of a language acknowledge the tentative nature of knowledge, rather than a tacit agreement about a fallacious objective basis.

Uncritical uses of the word 'knowledge' employ language which conceptualises knowing in abstraction from the realm of the sensory, the body. Abram (1996) has conducted considerable research in animate, storied, non-literate cultures which live a deep sensorial relationship with the ecosphere. He says:

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62 The legal fiction which underpinned the English colonisation of Australia is Terra Nullius, a Latin word which means empty land.
63 This notion comes from my memory of working with Aboriginal people in central Australia.
64 English does, in fact, have a series of words similar to 'know' which are of increasing strength of knowledge, but my experience is that they are not used in such a way as to reflect this 'continuum of ways of knowing'. For example, recognise, conceive, remember, realise, believe, memorise, understand, comprehend, intuit and practise can more accurately replace the verb 'know' in the appropriate context.
65 Only non-literate in the sense of the alphabet. He shows that these cultures have many other literacies, including literacy of the land and the ecosphere through a deep sensorial, reciprocal relationship.
We have forgotten the poise from living in storied relation and reciprocity with the myriad things, the myriad beings that perceptually surround us. Only if we can renew that reciprocity - grounding our new found capacity for literate abstraction in those older, oral forms of experience - only then will the abstract intellect find its real value. (1996, 270, emphasis given).

He says that it is definitely not a matter of going back, instead we need to go the full circle to unite our competence in "cool reason" with the more sensual and mimetic ways of knowing. In this way, according to Abram, we can enable the possibility of a shared world to anchor our unmediated, participatory engagement with the local and particular. He says:

…When reflection's rootedness in such bodily, participatory modes of experience is entirely unacknowledged or unconscious, reflective reason becomes dysfunctional, unintentionally destroying the corporeal, sensuous world that sustains it (1996, 303).

Abram's counsel to go the full circle to unite the mode of reason with the mode of the sensory, is in harmony with Wilber's (1996) comprehensive/transcendental schema which would integrate the mode of reason with the mode of the body and the mode of the spirit. It is also supported by transformative theorists such as Capra (1997), Macy (1998), Nhat Hanh (1991, 1995) and Reason (1988, 2000) who urge a realignment of the conceptual with the practical. Heron's (1996) cooperative inquiry work, which is underpinned by systems theory, is based upon the intentional collaborative processing of belief to produce different forms of knowledge. In particular, Heron’s postconceptual knowledge continuously aims to link the mode of reason with the mode of the body, or the conceptual with the experiential and sensory. This elucidation of the process of knowing gives me an even deeper appreciation of the wisdom of the Aboriginal elders whose knowledge, according to my understanding, has been gained by a life-time of ‘postconceptualising’. Cycles of experience, discussion about the experience, art, drama and dance about the experience, stories linking experience to landscape, a reading of the land and stories about experiences over a life-time provide an extremely high/deep degree of knowledge and wisdom.
5.3 A Methodological Process of Knowing

Essentially, cooperative inquiry applies the process of collaboratively cycling through the forms of knowing, gaining increasing practical knowledge as a result of each cycle. Theoretically, the framework looks as follows:

Stage 1. *First reflection phase.* Researchers come together to plan the topic, the inquiry statement or question, the plan of action, and the method of recording. (Propositional and presentational beliefs)

Stage 2. *First action phase.* Researchers explore an experience, apply an appropriate range of inquiry skills and keep records. (Experiential belief.)

Stage 3. *Second action phase.* A deepening immersion in the experience, with some bracketing off of preconceptions. Keep records. (Practical belief.)

Stage 4. *Second reflection phase.* Reporting, collating, reviewing, making sense and reaching agreement. This stage has deepening phases of engagement, so that there is reporting and reviewing of the actions followed by a deepening understanding of the actions. This is followed by a deepening understanding of each person's perspective followed by deepening reflectivity upon the perspectives. Finally, the meaning of the actions and perspectives and the meaning of the meanings is reflected upon. This is the grounding of practical belief upon propositional, presentational and experiential beliefs (Heron, 1996, 73 - 103). Repeated cycling together with the integrity of the belief/knowledge phases, underpins practical knowledge of human flourishing.

Before knowledge is belief, which is founded on some plausibility. Each form of knowledge has its own intersubjective validating principles which I shall articulate in the section on validity. Cycling of forms of knowledge is extremely important, enabling repeated opportunities to validly revise and adjust concepts, the propositional knowledge, through the experience of the body. The idea of this experience and sensuality-rich process is to remove the propositional or conceptual bias which can lock us into separated, conceptually narrow ways of thinking.

The postconceptual process of cooperative inquiry is inherently intersubjective through its necessary collaboration. It is potentially critically subjective and critically intersubjective through critical use of the radical inquiry skills which are listed in Appendix Four. For example, radical practice is paying extraordinary heed to the
operation of actions. The practice of dynamic congruence attends to all of the elements of an action such as purpose, motivation, goals, implementation and outcomes, to notice their congruence or lack thereof. Through the radical practice of dynamic congruence, participants in an inquiry may decide to investigate the way they relate to their children, or their partners or colleagues, or each other, to see if their habits are congruent with their values.

5.3.1 Validity

This subsection very briefly introduces the validity of cooperative inquiry and ethnography as methods of transformative human inquiry. A full account of validity and validity procedures for these methods is provided in Appendix Four. Heron (1996, 158) regards inquiry outcomes as valid if they are well-grounded in the prior forms of knowing which support them, that is, experiential, presentational, propositional and practical. Forms of knowing are valid, if they are well-grounded in the skills involved in the knowledge generating process, and in the procedures adopted to free them from distortion. A statement is valid if it is sound and well grounded and there are good reasons for making it, which means the process follows the four-fold cyclical processing of knowledge referred to above. The validity of cooperative inquiry rests on the integrity of its cycling between the forms of knowing, as well as the integrity of the forms of knowing. Most important to validity is the celebration of the 'being-values' which result from the emancipated social practice which are accompanied by the practical knowledge at the conclusion. In other words, it is valid if it is intrinsically worthwhile for human flourishing and in this way, the inquiry outcomes can affirm validity (Heron, 1996, 58, 158). For example in the Riverdale cooperative inquiry, outcomes of transformation towards sustainability affirm validity of the inquiry. This view of validity as human flourishing for participants (of which the initiating researcher is one) addresses both epistemological and political criteria for validity and is considerably different from the view of validity for which the researcher aims for some universal truth on the basis of her political and epistemological power.

The most important processual point about cooperative inquiry validity from my experience, is the fact that it is attended to. If there is regular collaborative attention to validity, assuring group members that the outcomes will be reliable, then the focus of
the inquiry can proceed with confidence in the process, a confidence that will, in a
circular way, contribute to validity. Ethnography is also used in this research, because
of its capacity to explicate and lucidly illustrate the wisdom of transformative
practitioners through story at Forest School. The validity of ethnography, as it is
adapted for use in this research with the Forest School, rests upon the claim to
knowledge by the storytellers and the intersubjective agreement between the
storytellers' accounts, together with the political sensitivity, skills of critical subjectivity
and integrity of the researcher.

In the version of validity as universal truth, diversity is objectified and multiplicity
reduced. Booth (1988) proposes the use of scope as a preferable criterion for judging
epistemological elaboration, because it has more potential to provide assurance of
evolution of social understanding than truth alone. The use of the criterion of scope
enables other notions such as consequences, significance, contexts, meaningfulness,
comprehensiveness and representation to more authentically elaborate the
interconnecting multiplicities. I continue with the use of the term ‘validity’ in the way
used by Heron (1996) which is, in the much broader use of the term as ‘scope’, to
integrate and celebrate ontological, epistemological and political concerns in the search
for human transformation as consequence.

To answer Guba and Lincoln’s (1994, 108) methodological question of how can the
inquirer go about finding out whatever he or she believes can be known, I used
Harding’s broader understanding of methodology to give an account of how the notion
of participation-as-perception is applied in research. I provided a methodology of
community learning for transformation, which includes detailed skills and competencies
for participants to learn to be transformative inquirers. I detailed knowledge as process
through Heron’s cyclical forms of knowing and validity as scope rather than universal
truth. The methodology is underpinned by the recognition that the process of knowing
creates and is reality at the same time.

**Chapter Summary**

This chapter supports a participating consciousness as described by Berman (1981) and
Reason (2000), which links the spiritual to the scientific and mind to matter. This is
required by radical ecologists such as Mathews (1994) and Capra (1997) as well as EfS
advocates such as Orr (2002) and Sterling (2001, 19). For this I have elaborated a holistic, process-based understanding of reality as being continuously created, of participative relation with the knower, fused with a participative epistemology. I have shown that the emancipatory paradigm is capable of being ontologically extended to include this. Accordingly, research, theorising and practice are inseparable aspects of the creative process.

These insights address the problem of a distinction between primary and secondary meaning, in which the secondary has been privileged, to the detriment of society of the north and the planet. Perception is participation in primary, unmediated, direct experience, using our learned concepts and cognitive structures to create our reality, whilst the linguistic, conceptual realm of secondary meaning, which has been objectified and separated, is actually dependent upon primary meaning. Conscious participation in the primary experience constantly leads us to revise our conceptual elaborations, enabling a continuously reflective process of transformative learning in which we cognitively create and recreate our world. Accordingly, as elaborated by Maturana and Varela (1987) cognition can be seen as a process of self-making during which one ‘brings forth their world’. Consequently, an emphasis on the conceptual, secondary meaning leads to the bringing forth of an unbalanced self and world, one that is distant from the primary experience on which it is dependent.

Research which seeks transformation of self and world would, therefore, orient itself towards methods which attend to the depth of experience and reflection upon this for meaningful, valid learning. The participative epistemology affirms multiple subjectivities of experience rather than an objective position, since it is the process itself that brings forth the knowing. As Abram (1996) shows, the real world is a collective field of experiences and matrixes of sensations and knowing, perceived from many angles. Accordingly, a methodology for community requires a foundation of intersubjectivity and critical intersubjectivity for revealing our deeply intertwined experiences and crafting a culturally, socially and politically sustaining life. This will be post-disciplinary, involving the development of a post-conceptual practical knowing through cycling forms of knowing, which aims to emancipate people from the grip of propositional structures that restrict our perception and lead to a dangerously unbalanced world.
In this chapter, I sought to provide a paradigmatic and methodological ground for the participatory approach to transformative learning in a school community, which is used in this dissertation. Berry writes:

   It’s all a question of story. We are in trouble just now because we do not have a good story. We are in between stories. The old story, the account of how the world came to be and how we fit into it, is no longer effective. Yet we have not learned the new story. (1990, 123)

The participatory approach is explicitly intended to work with the emergent fields towards the goals of sustainability, that is, to help learn the new story because the old story is linked to unsustainability.
CHAPTER SIX – COMMUNITY AT FOREST SCHOOL

In this chapter, I research a school community which was designed to be participatory. I focus on relationships in a community school which is underpinned by an understanding of participation whereby parents have equalised power and are recognised as having a broad range of competencies. In section one I consider schooling through a communitarianism lens. Section two is a report on an ethnography which was implemented at a school I call Forest School. In section three, the conclusion, I develop propositional knowledge about the development of a democratic dynamic in a school community.

6.1 Schooling Through a Communitarian Lens

In this first section I provide a short literature review of communitarianism, which is deeper and more specific to school community development than the radical ecology and EiS literature reviews already provided. Since communitarianism has developed in opposition to individualism, I include three understandings of individualism to illustrate the relational shift towards communitarianism.

Because of its whole of life approach, advocates of radical ecology see education as encompassing the whole of the life of the child, including the informal - 'education is life' and 'life is education' - a child is always learning. Holistic educators recognise the fundamental interconnectedness of all aspects of human life, integrating the physical, emotional, social, aesthetic/creative, spiritual, intellectual and vocational qualities and skills in every person (Miller, 1990, 155). On this basis, the community is the collection of people who surround the child and who pattern her life, including parents, teachers, extended family members, friends and the families of friends, staff at the shopping centre and others with whom the child comes into regular contact. Senge et al. (2000, 11 - 18) describe three nested systems inside the learning school. The first nested system is the classroom level which comprises teachers, students and parents. The school level adds the administrators, decision makers and those in authority such as

66 As I stated in chapter one, the media has a considerable effect on the child as well.
principals and superintendents. The third nested system is the community level which adds other community members.

The community arena is extremely significant because social skills and habits can only be developed and practised in a social context. This is the basis of a paradox, in that we need to model now what we would wish for the children's future, because children learn their culture from those around them. That is, the community needs to model the kinds of cultural and social skills, habits and practices that community members would choose for the future, now. As described in chapter three, because education reproduces the model of experience that is constitutive of society, we need to change the model of experience that is constitutive of society in order to change education and society. I am approaching the changing of the model of experience that is constitutive of society, through the community arena at school.

The term 'community' in the context of school has a variety of different interpretations in the literature. In the context of school, the term 'learning community' often refers to only teachers and students (for example Shapiro and Levine, 1999, or Cooper and Boyd, 1996). As a concept it encapsulates a combination of ideas including smaller organisational groups, an integrated curriculum and intentional academic and social support networks. In this dissertation I shall regard a school community as the group of people involved in the education and socialisation of the children on a regular basis. This means that the school staff and the children together with their families, extended families and friends, comprise the basis of my thinking and reflection on the school community. It is an extension of Townsend's (1994) notion of the core-plus67 school, which means that my notion of the school community includes adult learners who are engaged in life-long learning. These adult learners may or may not be the children’s family members.

6.1.1 The Social Nature of Life and Learning

Any which suggests that schools are the reason for economic failure is underpinned by a denial of the social nature of life and learning. Cultural values and attitudes, social skills, beliefs, understandings and practices underpin society. The community arena is

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67 Described in chapter one of this dissertation.
significant both as a locus of human life and as the place where children learn their culture. The social nature of life persists through transformations and incursions caused by modernity, technology and the rejection of tradition. In reference to his long life of anthropological work, Geertz (1995, 28 - 30) describes the continuity of the social nature of life as a continuity of political task. He explains that it is not continuity of event or essence, but "diversity, dispersion, and the enormous tenacity of immediate allegiance - to individuals, the force of character, in the one case; to we-ness, the force of likeness, in the other". My point here is that the social nature of life and learning, *is* children’s lived experience and development.

Through their history and continuity of practices, schools have undervalued the place of community in education (O'Sullivan, 1999, 52, Giroux, 1989, 152, 201). For example, school children in schools in Western Australia largely spend their days in a classroom with one adult (sometimes, two) shared between fifteen to thirty children. Often, these classroom environments feature hierarchical decision-making structures with the power centred on the teacher. The environment is often not conducive to children learning or practising social skills or values. Further, the school non classroom unstructured play times which are generally no more than one hour per day in total, usually comprise play with same age, and often same sex peers with one adult (sometimes, two) supervising one hundred or more children. Some schools intentionally limit children to socialisation with same age peers by allocating different play areas to different grades of children.

These restrictive school environments are not particularly conducive to the learning of social skills, values or social practices determined by society and the Curriculum Framework to be important, such as cooperation and appropriate conflict resolution, open, honest communication, democracy and social justice68. In these ‘normal’ school scenarios, it is clear that many children have very little time to develop as socially competent, caring, tolerant, compassionate beings. I suggest that this simple observation is part of the explanation for the difficulties in social and ecological renewal. Sociocultural writers such as Vygotsky and social learning theorists such as Bandura explain that children learn social behaviours by watching, discussing, modelling, mimicking, participating with and following behaviours and assimilating attitudes and

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68 In addition to this, many children spend a significant amount of their non-school time watching television or using the computer, which are two primary agents of possessive individualism and consumerist values.
values (Woolfolk, 1998, 44 - 45, 225 - 231). It follows that with regard to social skills and values, children should be part of a socially healthy community that practises the skills and values they need to learn, for a reasonable proportion of their daily lives. This means that they need people around them modelling, demonstrating, mentoring and explaining social practices.

### 6.1.2 The Tenuous Nature of the Communitarian Enterprise

The shift from the focus on a possessive individualism to a focus on a communitarian enterprise of working towards sustainability, is an exercise which is at times controversial and tenuous because as Mouffe (1992, 239) explicates, at the heart of radical democracy is a tension that can never be resolved. This tension is between individual rights and the common good. Radical ecology inherently focuses on means rather than ends, therefore from a radical ecology perspective, the modus operandi is crucial. I use the term ‘communitarianism’ in the sense of a loose personal and collective orientation towards community as the locus of a radical democratic life. It is not the narrower, fundamentalist definition of communitarianism which is characterised by a belief in the possibility of a 'common good'. Sandel (1998, ix - xiv) problematises the stance attributed to the communitarians of defending the 'common good' at the expense of 'individual rights', the liberal stance. I shall return to this problem shortly.

Communitarianism is underpinned by the idea of radical democracy rather than a liberal democratic polity. That is, communitarianism is underpinned by the idea of self-in-community (as discussed by Mathews, 1996, 76-8). Many aspects of a radical democracy are seen as antithetical to a liberal relational polity. Having stated this, I do not wish to enter the argument about the virtues of one polarity. Mouffe (1992) would radicalise democracy through emphasising the merits of liberal democracy. She uses an immanent critique to achieve this and suggests that it is not the ideals of democracy which are problematic but their lack of implementation in practice (1992, 1). According to Mouffe, the idea of a radical democracy is to actually implement democracy. This means that socialist goals are achievable through a real (radical) democracy. Geertz (1995, 38-40) describes the interplay of personages and peoples in politics. He sees the community arena as a contrast and interplay between a politics of the play of personages and a politics of the play of peoples. The politics of the play of peoples is "variously
responsive to attempts to engulf them in larger wholes" (1995, 30). The interplay of the
significance of the individual (personage) and of the importance of maintaining
individual identity whilst participating effectively without engulfment, in a political
community (peoples) is a vitally important community dynamic which is necessary in
any discussion about democracy. The distinction is sometimes seen as the distinction
between individual and citizen.

**Three Understandings of Individualism**

There are several understandings of individualism and each causes a related part of the
problem of business as usual. M. Fox (1990) explains that individualism manifests as
ruthless independence, abstraction and distance from each other and competitiveness.
Firstly, Mathews describes traditional atomism or substance pluralism (1994a, 10). She
illustrates how in the history of the western worldview, through Newton's work,
individualism became associated with mechanism. Subsequently the mechanistic
principle resulted in the "draining off of spirit from matter", which was "naturally
expressed in mind-matter dualism" (1994, 31). This had the effect of making the human
mind the repository of spirit. This dualism gave rise to the idea that matter is utterly
different to ourselves because we are identified with spirit, to which matter is
antithetical. Mathews explains material accumulation or consumerism as evidence of
dualism (1994a, 35, 36). Some writers such as W. Fox argue that excessive personal
attachment:

> would seem to have more to do with the cause of possessiveness, greed,
> exploitation, war and ecological destruction - than with the solution to
> these seemingly intractable problems (1995b, 262, italics given).

Secondly, according to Barns the ethos and institutions of a liberal relational order are
made problematic by:

> a pervasive, possessive individualism, a negative concept of freedom
> which inhibits purposive collective action, and an eschewal of any shared
> normative vision beyond the maintenance of personal and property
> rights. (1997, 24)

The problem of an individualism which is separated from community is its correlation
with consumerism, corporatisation, globalisation, inequity, injustice and consequentially
planetary crises. Bowles and Gintis articulate an association between individualism and
market (in)efficiency as follows:
In the absence of vital communities standing between the individual and the state, liberalism's cherished political principle liberty, is experienced more as loneliness than as freedom. And the putative allocative efficiency of the market is challenged by the proliferation of enforcement costs arising from the exercise of instrumental self-interest in a conflict-ridden economy inhabited by strangers. (1986, 144 - 5)

Macpherson (1962) describes possessive individualism as the roots of the central difficulties with liberal-democratic thought. According to Macpherson, possessive individualism can be traced as least as far back as Hobbes. Macpherson says:

Its possessive quality is found in its conception of the individual as essentially the proprietor of his own person or capacities, owing nothing to society for them. The individual was seen neither as a moral whole, nor as part of a larger social whole, but as an owner of himself. The relation of ownership, having become for more and more men the critically important relation determining their actual freedom and the actual prospect of realizing their full potentialities, was read back into the nature of the individual. …The human essence is freedom from dependence on the wills of others, and freedom is a function of possession. Society becomes a lot of free equal individuals related to each other as proprietors of their own capacities and of what they have acquired by their exercise. Society consists of relations of exchange between proprietors. Political society becomes a calculated device for the protection of this property and for the maintenance of an orderly relation of exchange. (1962, 3, my emphasis)

According to Mouffe (1992, 2) the argument that liberal democracy is identified with capitalism and private property is only one of articulatory practice and is therefore not necessary. This means that economic liberalism with its ownership of property and political liberalism with its ownership of self, can be distinguished then separated from one another.

Thirdly and very importantly, critical theorists demonstrate that notions such as 'individual', 'citizen', and 'personal attachment' never exist as apolitical vacuums. For example, Plumwood (1993), Giroux (1989) and Brosio (1994) explicate the operation of power and domination through the privilege of gender, race and class, making these sites and consequently schooling itself sites of cultural and political struggle and contestation. Giroux (1989, 41) comments that a growing alienation and breakdown of public life is reinforced by dominant ideologies of individualism, consumerism and scientific rationality. An increasing political illiteracy in the general populace together with higher education's increasing refusal to deal with the problems of citizenship and public life has contributed to qualitative decline in the "languages and social practices of
schooling, community and family life" (ibid.). A picture of alienation and breakdown of public life is further depicted by Burch:

It is a matter of historical record that the growth of individualism in society has paralleled the growth of commercially driven consumerism. And from a commercial perspective, the most profitable society imaginable would be one of fully "cocooned" individuals, terrified of their neighbours and deeply possessive of their "things". In such a society, every person must have his or her "own" collection of possessions to support their life, numb their boredom and, of course, protect them from all the other intensely lonely and envious individuals who might steal what is "theirs" rather than simply borrow things from a shared inventory, use them and return them! (Burch, 2000, 31)

In this subsection I have demonstrated that there is a link between individualism and social and ecological distress through an uncritical notion of individualism.

### 6.2 Radical Democracy – Re-Politicising Decision-making for Transformative Learning

Mouffe (1992) would free liberal democracy of its individualistic and rationalist tendencies through a radical reformulation. A radical democracy is visionary. Giroux writes:

A revitalised discourse of democracy should not be based exclusively on a language of critique... as part of a radical political project, the discourse of democracy also needs a language of possibility, one that combines a strategy of opposition with a strategy for constructing a new social order. (1989, 31)

A radical democracy is created in critical opposition to dominant power structures. It corrects the weaknesses and builds on the strengths of the traditions of liberalism and Marxism (which have thus far created the discursive frameworks for relational ideas). A radical democracy also extends the scope of democracy to include spheres of social life, community, family, workplace, economy, market and firm. Further, it would include questions about the kinds of people we want to be, as well as the moral and metaphysical topics that these questions uncover. Ranson and Stewart (1989) write that the purpose of the public domain is to facilitate trustworthy public choice about collective actions and intentions. This means that its role is to clarify, constitute and achieve public objectives. Its main responsibility is to produce a society as a political community with authority to make public decisions. Therefore the demanding task of
the public domain is to produce a 'public', which is able to gather, enter into dialogue and make decisions about the needs of the community as a whole.

Habermas (1989, 119) also proposes a re-politicising of the public sphere, to enable members of society the opportunity for "further emancipation and progressive individuation" through reflection. He writes that negative utopia is the conclusion of a technocratic consciousness and in order to bring about a rational society, restrictions on communication must be removed. For Habermas this involves re-politicising decision-making processes at all levels, with "public, unrestricted discussion, free from domination". He takes this discussion much deeper in 1996 (329 - 387), tracing the development of the notion of civil society. He describes the public sphere as a "network for communicating information and points of view" which is reproduced through communicative action, like the lifeworld itself. In it, a communication structure generates social space through communicative action. Habermas uses Parsons' notion of 'influence', which is conviction or persuasion that relies on mutual understanding. He shows that political influence, like social influence can be transformed into political power through appropriate political structure when supported by public opinion. He writes:

Civil society is composed of those more or less spontaneously emergent associations, organisations and movements that, attuned to how societal problems resonate in the private life spheres, distil and transmit such reactions in amplified form to the public sphere. (1996, 367)

I am interested in Habermas' idea of the civil society as public and private spheres being linked through communication structures. He points out that these are very sensitive to detecting and identifying problem situations such as ecological, humanitarian and peace issues, which are relayed to the political centre (1996, 381). There is considerable scope for political action by citizens in this notion of civil society, especially in the construction and maintenance of social movements, transformative action and civil disobedience. This relies on a dynamic understanding of democracy as a self-organising, continuing, inclusive project, relying on participative rights and effective participative structures. For the conscientious actor, it is a ready context for social transformation. On the other hand, with communicative difficulties it might be nothing more than an opinionated, dysfunctional social sphere.
According to Barns (1997, 27) a radical democracy would have a two-fold orientation, firstly creating a participative public domain in which the practices of democracy are recognised as shaping our identities and secondly creating a more substantive vision of the common good. However, this communitarian notion of the common good is problematic, because of its implicit rejection of pluralism. There is never any politically neutral notion of citizenship and democratic struggles are always diverse. Hence, Rawls' insistence that individual rights cannot be forsaken for the sake of general welfare, that is, a particular idea of the good life must not be privileged in any principles of justice. As Sandel (1998, ix) explains, the issue is not as simple as that cast as the 'liberal-communitarian' debate. The problem with the so-called communitarian notion of the common good is that of engulfing the needs and demands of individuals who may be marginalised by spheres of power in the process of the determination of the good. This means that it sacrifices justice, which is, in the words of Sandel, "to violate the inviolable, to fail to respect the distinction between persons" (1998, 16). The differentiation between persons is known as plurality. This is a necessary condition for the possibility of justice.

There is considerable acceptance that plurality is given prior to unity, in cooperation for mutual advantage (eg. Rawls, 1993, Sandel, 1998, Mouffe, 1992). The problem with the view of rights as always taking priority over the common good is that there is no possibility of establishing a general welfare because rights always take precedence. There are many positions in between which are vociferously contested, which link justice and rights to conceptions of the good in a conditional, moral or relative way. For example Sandel argues "rights depend for their justification on the moral importance of the ends they serve." Mouffe (1992, 231) suggests a process-oriented solution to the conundrum, which seems similar to Bowles’ and Gintis' (1986, 186) notion of a democratic dynamic. Mouffe’s suggestion comprises a dynamic interaction of rules and actors to address this difficulty. She develops a more complex "specific language of civil intercourse" arising from a non-conservative version of Oakeshott's notion of the *respublica*. *Respublica* is comprised of *universitas* (a mode of association involving the undertaking of an enterprise or resolving a common interest or substantive purpose) and *societas* (a formal association underpinned by relationships and rules determined by loyalties). Mouffe (1992, 237) specifies that these notions, which are *respublica*,
societas and political community, be regarded as discursive surfaces rather than empirical referents. The resulting political community is underpinned by a political identity of radical democratic citizens. This political identity depends upon a common identification with a radical democratic interpretation of the principles of liberty and equality (1992, 236). Mouffe says this would construct a 'we' - a chain of democratic equivalence among demands. She suggests that the resulting rules create a common political identity between people engaged in a variety of different purposes, creating a political community held together by a common bond rather than a substantive vision of the common good.

These notions, of political community comprising respublica and societas and radical democratic citizens, allow for the recognition of both individual liberty and pluralism without abandoning normative aspects to the sphere of private morality (1992, 235). Mouffe (1992, 238) explains that in this way, the private/public distinction is maintained (individual liberty/respublica), as is the individual/citizen, however they do not correspond to separate, discrete spheres. There is considerable overlap and non-clarity between duties as a citizen and freedom as an individual. These are the two identities which exist in a never to be reconciled tension. This is the central tension of modern democracy - between liberty and equality. She says that any attempt to realise 'true' democracy, or a perfect harmony, can only lead to the destruction of democracy. In this way, the final achievement of a political community through the complete realisation of democracy as a project of radical and plural democracy is an impossibility.

According to Mouffe, the real aim is to struggle for the deepening of the democratic revolution using the liberal democratic tradition's symbolic resources, knowing that the process is continuous. She concludes:

My thesis here has been that the ideal of citizenship could greatly contribute to such an extension of the principles of liberty and equality. By combining the ideal of rights and pluralism with the ideas of public spiritedness and ethico-political concern, a new modern democratic conception of citizenship could restore dignity to the political and provide the vehicle for the construction of a radical democratic hegemony. (1992, 238)

Arendt takes up Mouffe’s quest for a deepening democratic revolution, with her notion of the public sphere as a political community in which citizens of a democracy
participate collectively to democratically resolve issues affecting their lives. In this way the problem of identity and its need for individuality, against plurality and its need for a participative public sphere, can be satisfactorily resolved. I shall use the context of radical democracy to investigate notions of community in the following section.

**A Community Orientation for a Sense of Human Wholeness**

Stocker and Pollard describe communitarianism as an approach that highlights the significance of a sense of community to the sense of human wholeness and selfhood. The approach highlights the roles and responsibilities of citizens in the community. Definitions of what constitutes 'community' are multitudinous and open. Stocker and Pollard list four descriptive categories of community, which are: geographic proximity (such as the Fremantle community), coincidence of interests (such as the farming community), sense of identity (such as the gay community) and shared cultural values (such as the Jewish community) (1994, 2). My examples will apply to the school community that is the group of families and staff of a school. According to Croft, "Authentic and real community is characterised by the form of communication between community members" (1997, 1). Croft uses the term community in the sense where its members regard it as an integral part of their lives. This means that the community receives constant consideration by its members. In this sense members consider the question, "If I say that, what will be the effect on my community?" each time they speak (Croft, 1997, 1). According to Croft, face-to-face communication is the most significant resource in building a community, with relationship building, authenticity, respect and conviviality in every act. Buber describes community and contrasts it with collectivity, to speak about the notion of community which comprises a depth of being 'with' due to the I - thou relationship:

…community, growing community… is the being no longer side by side but with one another of a multitude of persons. And this multitude, though it also moves towards one goal, yet experiences everywhere a turning to, a dynamic facing of, the others, a flowing from I to Thou. Community is where community happens. Collectivity is where an organised atrophy of personal existence, community on its increase and confirmation in life lived towards one another. The modern zeal for collectivity is a flight from community's testing and consecration of the person, a flight from the vital dialogic, demanding the staking of the self, which is in the heart of the world. (1964, 51, italics given)

M. Scott Peck puts a case that there is, "something about community that is inherently
mysterious, miraculous, unfathomable", and that community is, "something more than its individual members" (1988, 60). He explains this 'something more' as almost mystical and discloses that language falls short in being able to explicate the quality. Buber (1964, 49) writes with clarity and beauty about a quality of communication, which I interpret to be the spirit, state or quality referred to by Peck:

Only he who himself turns to the other human being and opens himself to him receives the world in him. Only the being whose otherness, accepted by my being, lives and faces me in the whole compression of existence, brings the radiance of eternity to me. Only when two say to one another with all that they are, "It is Thou", is the indwelling of the Present Being between them.

Peck's and Buber's descriptions of genuine community are characterised by a spirit of communion between people. Buber describes the communion in terms of dialogue underpinned by relation and empathy, which he says are possible through both silence and speech (1964, 123). Croft explains the operation of community in holographic terms. He illustrates how a community, at the micro and macro levels, operates as a multi-level fractal in the sense that in a multi-level fractal, if a piece is broken off the whole is still in the broken piece (1997, 3). This means that communication between two individuals will be underpinned by the same qualities as those that underpin the community as a whole. This means that at all times, in small groups or in the private or public spheres, community members treat each other with the greatest of respect. Peck (1987, 60) compares real community to a beautiful gem, which is so beautiful that it may seem unreal, "like a dream you once had when you were a child, so beautiful it may seem unattainable". He asserts that although the idea may seem utopian and unattainable, the transformation towards a society underpinned by this model of community is modest and necessary and without it the future may be unthinkably bleak.

Stocker and Pollard (1994, 3) use Cochran's work to list characteristics which define the boundaries and membership of a given community and which are enduring descriptors of community form. These are: traditions, loyalty, commitment, common stories, authority, common conceptions of the good, common actions and ritual. Forster (1995), writes that 'community' emerges as a dynamic whole when a group of people participate in common practices, depend upon one another, make decisions together, identify themselves as part of something larger than the sum of their individual relationships and

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69 The endnote given describes "indwelling of the Present Being" as the Divine Presence.
commit themselves for the long term to their own, one another's and the group's well-being. He teaches that in his experience, the commitment to the long term is the most significant. For this commitment, people need to learn to deal with conflict even where there is a strong ethic of cooperation, peace seeking and harmony. He asserts that conflict should not be avoided or repressed, but treated as something which is inevitable and which needs to be worked with skilfully to produce creative, vital results. In his words:

Communities which avoid conflict not only fail to resolve differences satisfactorily, they deprive themselves of a major source of creativity and vitality. (1995, 9)

Forster has learned that communities need to balance freedom with responsibility and writes that individuality and community responsibility may be mutually inclusive.

Stocker and Pollard assert that the acceptance of both personal and shared responsibility is the means by which community values can be expressed and acted upon (1994, 3). They suggest that personal empowerment is through the acceptance of responsibility and comment that participatory democracy is partially concerned with a route to empowerment because it is individuals' acceptance of responsibility (1994, 5). There is much literature focusing on communication processes within community, which are underpinned by ontological and cosmological presumptions of the spirit of peace, including: Brown and Brown (1996); Boyd (1996); Gastil (1993) and Scott Peck (1987). Communication processes including dialogue, cooperative inquiry, defusing personal agendas, mediation and other strategies for promoting harmony and cooperation, such as commitment to personal transformation, have been addressed at length (for example, Heron, 1996).

M. Scott Peck (1987, 86) comments that communities are like individuals, each unique and each progressing through certain stages in their maturity. Peck (1987) has identified stages in community building, as pseudo-community, chaos, emptiness and community. Once they have reached the stage 'community', they may retreat to earlier stages at any time. Peck warns that maintaining themselves as a true community is a task that communities must always do first and problem solving and all other tasks and goals second (1987, 105). This is debatable, however. Seed (1997) stated that in his opinion, focusing on a task together such as an ecological task is a far better way to build community than just talking about community. The compromise path through this
debate is to focus on process, in that the community building forms the basis for the process that is continuous whatever the activity (as per Mouffe, 1992, 231). This view is supported by Metcalf who describes a tension felt by many groups between the 'doing' and 'being' aspects of collective life. He noticed, "when a group devotes more attention to 'doing' through group projects, members come closer, promoting their sense of 'being'" (1996, 77). In my opinion, the orientation towards process is crucial to community health.

**Communities as Interconnected Learners**

The nature of the self is focal in a discussion about democracy, since individual selves linked by interconnected processes, practices, institutions and signs constitute society. The self is considerable both individually and collectively. A key difference between a radical democracy and a liberal democratic polity is that in the former, the emphasis is upon constant learning, as opposed to the latter where the emphasis is upon constant choosing (Bowles and Gintis, 1986). Within a radical democracy the family and community as venues for the becoming of persons are not separated by boundaries from the public debate. The distinction between the public and private become blurred, a point which is regarded by some as troublesome due to the complications caused by the negotiation of difference (Bowles and Gintis, 1986, 66 - 8, 125). According to Barns, the virtue of mutual respect is a precondition to going beyond the politics of exclusion in dealing with difference about opposing accounts of the common good (Barns, 1997, 32). In the communitarian sense we are "persons-in-community" (Barns, 1997, 30). According to Bowles and Gintis (1986, 178) bonding is constitutive of, rather than being merely instrumental to social action. This communitarian understanding of self as learner and as mutually respectful person-in-community is supported by Mathews' argument that self is a process. In her words - "...self is a process, involving an unfolding, a becoming, in time" (Mathews, 1994a, 146). This understanding of the self is consistent with Wilber’s (1996) view of the self as seer or navigator of development and actualisation, and is crucial to the unfolding of a participative public domain. The notion of self as relational, as learner and as process in the unfolding of a participative public domain, is essential to the process of ecological social transformation.
Gastil (1993) describes the influence we have over each other as a form of power. He describes how the relational and deliberative features of small group democracy are embodied in fully democratic conversations with partners respecting and appreciating one another, safeguarding speaking and listening opportunities, listening carefully and speaking responsibly. However he mentions that these features are ideal but far from the norm with many conversations in the USA being predominated by narcissism, competitiveness and individualism (1993, 144.) In discussions about a relational self, it is clear that the personal/political or private/public divide needs to be addressed in order to facilitate appropriate cultural transformation. Korten puts forward a reform/radical people-centred vision based upon the idea of development as transformation rather than growth. He points to the necessity to engage the creative energies of billions of people in global-scale social learning in order to bring about a just, sustainable and inclusive world (1990, 106). Although this is a daunting thought, it is more optimistic to consider the large number of radical democracy, grass roots based community-building projects currently operating throughout the world. These include the Sarvodaya Movement in Sri Lanka, which has been in progress for twenty or more years (see Macy, 1993), the Gaia Foundation in Australia70, as well as the tremendous potential of school teachers and parents to create democratic, inclusive communities for their children at school.

Drawing upon their critique of liberal theory, Bowles and Gintis (1986, 178) state:

Post-liberal democracy is a vision of society based on learning governed by the exercise of personal rights. It presents a profound re-orientation of our normative grid, an inversion of the relationship between human development and economic organisation.

In this way, economic activity can be seen as a means towards democratically determined forms of human development. They say that this model and its sense of history is based on learning rather than accumulation:

not on the ever-widening appropriation of nature in the interests of economic development, but on the continuing deepening of capacities and understandings through a process of personal and social transformation in the interests of human development (1986, 178).

In section one of this chapter I presented the idea of community within the context of radical democracy. I explained the importance of community in education, a field that has generally been neglected by education writers and policy makers. With the aim of

transformation from a paradigm underpinned by individualism towards a communitarian approach to life in general and schooling in particular, the arena of the community is significant as a site for social change. The problem of individualism is the connection between it and social and ecological alienation. I have considered the notion of the self as learner and as process in the unfolding of a participative public domain. The given concept of relational self does not separate the public and the private domains, is underpinned by the communitarian notion of 'persons-in-community' and a paradigm of 'urban friendship' and is based on virtue ethics. Using this perspective, development is transformation towards a just, sustainable and inclusive world in which the personal is the political. Using a radical democracy concept of community, I investigate the community of Forest School, below.

6.2.1 Ethnography of Forest School Community

In this section, I report on an investigation of the community of Forest School, a small, libertarian school that had been operating for fifteen years in 1995 when the research was carried out. My beginning interest in Forest School was to see if schools-as-intentional-communities could actually work as effective, functional, radical democratic communities, and if so, how. I wanted to know if a school could sustain a communitarian approach over the longer term. I wanted to understand communitarianism as it was applied in a school - to investigate its history, development and maintenance.

Background to the Study

I began this research with Caffery's beautiful Masters dissertation, which documented her naturalistic research into five alternative communal schools, four in northern New South Wales and one in southern Queensland. In her research she concluded that, "alternative communal schools, especially the secular, have the potential to reactivate a cohesive and committed community" (1987, 48). However her research sounded a strong warning, suggesting that the schools "may now be basking in the glow of the mellow sunshine which precedes the sunset". At the time of her research all of the schools had suffered a big reduction in enrolment. A secular non-commune school's

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71 The school has now been in operation for twenty years.
enrolment was 40 in 1984, and dropped to 13 in 1986 when her study was implemented. To create a background for the Forest School study, I will provide an overview of Caffery's study since there are very important similarities and differences between Caffery's study and the Forest School study. The schools studied by Caffery commenced in the mid to late 1970s, while Forest School started in the late 1970s/early 1980s. Two of Caffery's research schools belonged to commune complexes, while the other three were patronised by community groupings "recognisably distinguished from mainstream societies" (1987, 6). One of Caffery's schools is in urban New South Wales, three are in rural New South Wales and one is in rural Queensland. One school is based in a religious commune and is hierarchical in structure, while the other four are secular and egalitarian. One of the secular schools is for the children of a commune. Caffery writes that the schools were set up as part of the alternative lifestyle movement that began in the early 1970s. This involved a movement to rural communities, mainly by young adults, as part of a rejection of the materialistic, consumerist, industrialised lifestyle of their parents. The movement has been called rejectionism. Wolin writes:

The origins of rejectionism lie in the 1960s. The turmoil of those years was not solely about the Vietnam War: it was about racism, imperialism, professionalism, affluence, moral codes, orthodox notions of sexuality and gender, and much more, from junk food to slick culture. It was revolutionary not because it was violent - the violence was exaggerated by the media - but because it was uncivil and yet civil: uncivil in withdrawing from and condemning the bourgeois forms of civility, but civil in inventing new ones, many of them bearing the marks of an obsession with participation and equality as well as an intoxication with the first experience of power, the experience of cooperation, common sacrifice, and common concern. 'Sharing' threatened suddenly to lose its sentimental overtones and become a political word. (Wolin, 1992, 251)

The rejectionist movement that spawned the five schools in Caffery's study was embedded in an intention to create a new society in microcosm, based upon voluntary simplicity, personal power and communal sharing.

The schools were set up a few years after the original alternative lifestyle movement commenced, when the children of the new settlers reached school age and the decisions about their schooling needed to be made. There was a definite rejection of the oppressive, hierarchical, authoritarian model of schooling that they had rejected for themselves only a few years before. Alternative education was developed because the
participants saw that "prisons for children" (traditional schools) needed to be avoided (Caffery, 1987, 8). It was based upon a philosophy of:

personal growth and freedom in a setting of communal closeness, … which recognises that people do have the ability and the power to operate their own schools. (Caffery, 1997, 8)

Caffery discovered that a central problem for the long-term survival of the schools was that they were started as a reaction to traditional schooling as the immediate goal. They were not started as a response to a conscious striving for community sustainability. School (and community) sustainability became her central research issue. She found considerable evidence of a vision of optimism based on the alternative community premise of 'caring for and sharing with', the 'we-consciousness' defined by Cock. However the vision and the practice were disparate. She said that as the years passed by, people sometimes drifted back towards more individualistic and private economic goals, causing diminished group interdependence, which caused the inevitable collapse of the communal philosophy. This meant that the balance between communal sharing and personal power had been upset within their home communities. She commented that the solution to this could lie with the schools, but she did not find this to be the case. The schools appeared to suffer the same problematic dynamic as the communities they were associated with.

As the years passed individualism seemed to become more attractive, with the sentiment:

We've got kids now and material possessions and we don't want them or our energy ripped off! (Informant in Caffery, 1987, 14)

Many families left their alternative communities and schools and I presume their counter culture life styles, to protect their children from the "sort of nihilism" and futility that they perceived (ibid.). Interestingly and importantly for my research, she found that some parents felt that that they did not learn anything from the experience of schooling or community. She found that a crucial deficiency for the alternative schools was the lack of organisational strength of a unified, committed community. She found that as a whole there was a deficit of, "a collective ideological vision to foster future sustainability of the communities" (1987, 17). Nonetheless she found much evidence for hope and although there were significant issues in need of addressing, the task of addressing the issues was definitely achievable. She found that all schools broadly
reflected the "caring for and sharing with others" attribute named by Cock as characteristic of alternative communities.

One school expressed the desire to regard school as an extended family and in this school she found, through the association of parents and other community volunteers, "a visible and tangible love-force" (Caffery, 1987, 18). An interesting point she highlights in her study is the high degree of parental subscription to the ideal of freedom of choice. She says this underpins the nature of the particular alternative lifestyles and can result in a high degree of child transience through different homes and with different parents or carers. She makes a particularly interesting observation about parent learning, which I shall quote in detail:

The end result of the communal sharing is a community participation in and commitment to an educational process which far exceeds community input in mainstream schools. It is vital for the continued survival and progress of alternative schools... It is not only the children who are the beneficiaries of communal task sharing. It is a two-way process, an interchange of learning as there is 'concurrently an educational trip happening for parents'. The self-esteem of parents is enhanced as their confidence increases in working with the children... The outcome is enhanced parent involvement and interest in their children's education both at home and at school. It is very much a situation where 'all community members learn, especially learning to live together'. (Caffery, 1987, 26)

She comments that 'caring for and sharing with' is necessary but insufficient and that a deep commitment to the philosophy and awareness of the values in everyday practice is essential.

Caffery writes that a lack of real commitment manifests in a variety of conflicts, which seriously threaten community sustainability and that: "too little commitment and too much conflict is the major weakness of alternative communal education" (1987, 30). A deterioration of parental commitment parallels a lack of parental involvement, which can cause unproductive parental apathy. She points out that these attributes cause community school attrition, which can itself snowball further attrition due to the resulting low parental perception of the school and consequent lack of confidence. She raises a point, which is very significant for the present research, which is that at the start of the school, there was a spirited enthusiasm of starting, a "heroic phase" of surmounting financial and physical barriers. Later, this spirited enthusiasm begins to dissipate, interest subsides, involvement becomes inconsistent and conflict becomes
inevitable (1987, 34). She comments that the conflict, together with an ineffective committee structure and conflict resolution structures and procedures are extremely problematic. She points out that when everything is running smoothly, school is taken for granted with limited feedback to the teachers. However when things deteriorate, complaints are loud and teachers may become the 'scapegoat'. She suggests that the "selfish individualism" of a few parents who can cause huge problems in a school, may be part of their use of an alternative school as an egoistical trip of their own, with little concern for their own children's needs (1987, 36).

Responsibility for the resolution of conflict and the re-kindling of community commitment can be an onerous and draining task when it becomes the teacher's role. She summarises the constraints on the school community as flagging commitment and rising conflict, lack of order and structure in terms of teacher direction and parent rosters, and threat of government funding cuts. Her recommendations are summarised by seven strategies for survival, listed below:

Mobilisation impetus by leader or leading group. Reshaping of a coherent philosophy with short and long term goals. Establishment of a commitment mechanism by the community to strive for goals. Willingness by group to accept organisational structure to strengthen group unity. Acceptance by group of appropriate strategies for conflict resolution. Mutual support within groups and between groups. Recognition by government and traditional society that 'they have a place'. (1987, 36)

The outcomes of my Forest School research were quite different to Caffery's. In my opinion the Forest School community had learned a way to become sustainable. Along the way they had addressed each of Caffery's strategies for survival to some extent, by developing particular habits of action, mind and spirit, which I suggest are essential in order for Caffery's strategies to be meaningfully implemented. In other words, these habits of mind, spirit and practice scaffold the community towards sustainability.

I shall now write about my ethnographic research with Forest School. In 1995, Forest School was a small, secular independent school with an enrolment of about fifty students. The children who attended the school came from Beachtown (the larger rural town about fifteen kilometres away), smaller rural localities nearby, an intentional community about eight kilometres away and from a variety of smallholdings. It was
chosen for this study because it was the only established community school that was reasonably accessible for me to visit regularly to research. A discussion on the validity of ethnography as it is used in this research is provided at the start of Appendix Four.

**Research Method**

I interviewed thirty one of the early participants in Forest School, most of whom were still involved in the school to some degree during the interview period (at least to drop in occasionally if their children had departed the school program). I also interviewed one new participant. As per Hastrup (1994), I conducted many long interviews, hearing stories of love, passion and anguish and gaining considerable experiential and propositional (but not practical) knowledge about the school community as an intentional community. The interviews were informal and ethnographic in nature. I sat with the interviewees with a tape recorder running, for two to seven hours each, usually spread over a number of interviews. I asked general questions about the nature and progress of the school which usually led to relaxed ‘story telling’. I requested in-depth descriptions of specific events, some of which were cross-referenced with the accounts of subsequent interviewees to give an intersubjective perspective.

I regarded each of the informants as an authority who each had different or overlapping parts of a big story to tell. Each story weaves as a strand into a bigger story. Except for one interviewee, the informants each had a long and very active involvement in the community of the school (8 – 15 years) and had been recommended to me by others. Mostly, I simply listened while interviewees related their stories. Most interviewees told me that the interviews were pleasant experiences of talking and clarifying incidents from the past with an attentive listener. As the research progressed I realised that I needed the perspective of a recent parent, which I subsequently included. This parent had been at the school for only one year at the time of the interview. I did not intend to inquire specifically into the experience of the school students. However, I did interview two past students and two current students.

In writing the research I cite the pseudonym of the speaker at the conclusion of the quotation together with their interest in the school, and the amount of time they had

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As of December, 2001, this remains the case. The enrolment has increased slightly.
been with the school at the time of the interview, which was in 1995. I have repeated
this information each time I cited the person, for continuity and ease of reading. I have
organised the material in the following way. Firstly, still as part of this background I
introduce the participants through their orientation towards libertarianism, in the
subsection: why a communitarian school? The next subsection provides a brief
historical context in the rejectionist philosophy of the new settlers. Following that, I
write about the practising of the communitarian habits, followed by some symptoms and
causes of community dysfunction. The final subsection is about community
reproduction and presents an account of the changing of the guard, which I suggest
made a considerable contribution towards the longevity of the school. I conclude the
account of the study with two children's stories. It is important to keep in mind that the
information below is the 'wisdom of the elders', so to speak. I deliberately sought out
the people who had long experience of the school community, to ask their advice. These
people were 'the stayers' - they survived the various conflicts and periods of dysfunction
that some others did not. We cannot presume that everyone at the school has this degree
of wisdom. We can presume that everyone has a degree of propositional knowledge
about community though, because of the learning structures and procedures set up by
these elders, which everyone participates in. We can also presume that everyone has
some experiential knowledge and a developing practical knowledge, which they gain
through participation in this community.

Why a Communitarian School?

There were two main reasons for participation in this school. These were what I call
intentional social transformation, as well as simply wanting children to have the chance
to be happy and creative while learning at school. Very early in my research, I became
firmly convinced that the parents who were involved in the school with the children did
so because they loved to do it. They were firmly committed to making their children's
education fun, enjoyable, meaningful and worthwhile. Parents often taught small or
large groups of children particular skills or knowledge that they could share, either at
their own homes or at the school. They would often just call in outside of their roster
hours, to help the teachers or just be there. In doing so they created an atmosphere of
happiness, laughter, friendship and care for the children and each other. Undoubtedly
this contributed to the children's sense of well-being at school. The community in which
the children were learning was supportive and nurturing and modelled social and interpersonal skills as well as active citizenship and contribution to the greater good.

Everyone at Forest School who was interviewed for this research subscribed to a philosophy underpinned by libertarian aspirations. For example:

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but I just felt in my heart that those things the school stood for, for the "whole" child without spoiling the child, without destroying their inner essence. I suppose I feel that the western world acts to change that inner essence. I wanted to nurture their self esteem, to nurture their zest for learning and the essence of their being. (Taneeka, parent, 8 years involvement in the school)
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In terms of its goals and processes, the school was designed to reflect these aspirations. Further, for many participants their intention was always to transform their lives and work and have a transformative effect on the broader society as well as their own children. Some participants pointed out that as well as for the good of their children, the prime reason for their involvement was for their own empowerment in transforming ‘the planet’, the broader society. Taneeka’s explanation exemplifies the link between her own 'empowering' and participation in the school:

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So at that particular time, it was 1984 [the year her son, Ashley, was born] there was a nuclear build up all over the world and there was also that counter-reaction. The peace groups, the People against Nuclear Disarmament. I saw this film which I think was called "The Day After". A whole lot of things came together and I just took this thing [social transformation] on.

... We just decided that we were going to stop this thing, that we can't do it any other way. That graphic film, it just sort of brought me to this realisation that it could happen, it could really happen and that there are no choices after that. This baby, the world, the future, it became really important to me. Making choices, for our family and myself and getting involved in things that would change the future. And now [laugh] I feel bad that I didn't do it for myself and for the world, but for my little baby I would do it [laugh]. It was a total turn-around on how I viewed the world. [I began to understand that] creating a better world for my child, for the family was actually the best thing for the whole world. I would suddenly become a part of the world, whereas before I was not involved, I was just drifting in the sea or something and then I suddenly stepped on the land and it was just "oh, wow". That was all a huge thing for me and it drew me to the school. I sort of knew what the ideologies were and I just wanted Ashley to be there, because we need a school like that for the changes to come. (Taneeka, parent, 8 years involvement in the school, still intensely involved with two children at the school)
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73 A libertarian education is concerned with community democracy, together with education ideals of non-authoritarian teaching and learning methods aiming to develop the creativity of the 'whole child' in a context of real life.
However, not everyone had subscribed to libertarian ideals prior to enrolment at Forest School. There are those who began simply because they were looking for a school where their children or they would be happier or more welcome. For example here is Dianne’s description of how she chose the school:

I hadn't even considered Forest School. I really didn't even know that it was going. There wasn't a lot of publicity about it and a lot of people thought that it was just doing grades one and two and that they [the children] would have to leave the school [after grade two]. She started at Smithtown, she liked it. ... But I was never really approved of because I had gone from this town to that town. Then I started hearing about Forest School and that she could go there. I thought: "it's got a reputation of people who are hippies, drop outs, and no good", and I thought, "well if we're going to be outsiders, we might as well be deeply out!" And we were driving past one day and we thought, "well, we'll call in". We saw Herb Jones, he was up a ladder repairing something. We asked if he minded if we had a look around and he said, "no, you go for it, have a look around", and he just said, "oh, it's a lovely school, it's got a nice atmosphere", and we said that we were seriously thinking of sending Alana there. "Just do it", he said, "just do it". So we did, on his advice! (Dianne, parent, 14 years continuous involvement in the school)

Kath's reason is similar:

I wanted her to like to learn. That was my big thing. I didn't want her to get tough and hard and just learn to survive. (Kath, parent, 7 years at the school, still intensely involved)

Stephanie speaks of the potentially better teaching/learning atmosphere:

One of the things that I think attracted me, that I wanted, was just that smaller one on one with the teachers. That was really important. Because Beachtown was already crowded, I knew that wasn't going to come close... I think we did a lot of letting the kids make decisions and participate in their own choices [at Forest School]. I don't feel that happens at the government schools. I think they are more like sheep and I think that crushes their creativity a lot, and their sense of self esteem in a lot of ways. So I thought it would be good if we could work on that, because I think that is a better education. (Stephanie, parent, 14 years involvement in the school, which ended 6 years ago)

James’s reason, as one of the founders, is a combination:

*Why did you want to start an alternative school? (interviewer)*

Good question. We were just coming out of our hippie phase, you know? We were into the Brotherhood and the love and the peace era... We were vegetarians for a start, which might not have been a big twist, but... I think we were hoping to create an environment where they would actually want to go to school. That was important, that was the big negative from all the parents. They'd all had experiences that, you know, school was so boring and this and that and we didn't want that to happen.
Everyone had the same vibe: we could do better. And there was nothing to lose, because all our hearts were all in the right spot. The least they could get out of it was lots of love and a good creative start. That was the whole point. You know, in those days we were 25, 28, maybe a bit older. Myself reflecting back on my education, I just thought, if we could give them a really good creative base, for the family. Family was everything. That is, fifteen years ago, in Beachtown. … Beachtown was a really family oriented town. We just wanted to have the extended family... (James, parent and part time teacher, 9 years intensive involvement in the school, which finished 6 years ago. He still maintains some involvement.)

The development of the children's creativity was always given a high priority and the school have always arranged specialist art, drama and music teachers in addition to regular primary school teachers who are expected to participate fully in the life of the community. Over the years, the school has established a solid reputation for itself in the regional town for its creativity, including music, drama and visual art and craft. This section has illustrated that people came to the school for a combination of reasons. They wanted their children to be happy, and/or they wanted a more creative, holistic education for their children, and/or they wanted to be part of a smaller, welcoming community where their self-estees would not be crushed, and/or they wanted to participate in the social transformation of society. No-one attended solely because it was the local school. (It was a considerable distance to travel to and there were several closer schools for many participants).

**History: Learning to Work Together, Aspiring to Communitarian Principles**

The early developers of the school who were interviewed had the dedication and determination to go to the enormous work of starting and maintaining a school where they would create an educational environment for themselves and their children. The educational environment held to principles of community, compassion, participation and a libertarian educational pedagogy. It was and continues to be a huge volume of work, as this quotation from Frank shows:

… activities which are so diverse, from administration, to teaching, to fund-raising, to building, to any and everything. Dealing with the lease arrangements, school buses, there is just so much. And then, on top of all that, the kids. (Frank, parent and part time teacher, 8 years involvement in the school, still involved)

The school is situated about four kilometres from a small town.
In the late seventies the town comprised one shop. The shop was a typical Australian country general store with a post office agency and selling hardware, groceries, newspapers and stock supplies. About thirteen kilometres from the school is a large town, Beachtown. This town functions as a centre for the small towns with state and Catholic schools, medical facilities, shire offices, hotels, post office and banks. The region's economic activities comprised cattle farming, timber and fishing in the coastal towns. Slowly at first, the character of the region began to change in the mid seventies with the utopian 'back to the earth' movement. The peace movement of the 1970s and the so-called ‘hippy’ alternative lifestylers inspired this. Rather than being overtly welcoming, the locals tolerated the new settlers. The new settlers collectively and individually purchased land on which they could grow vegetables, build their own houses and be self-sufficient. Many came for the surf at Beachtown and lived a healthy life of hard work, surf, music and community participation and contribution. Some new settlers did not stay for long but many stayed permanently.

Paradoxically, from the early years of the movement the new settlers caused a demand for land, which caused land prices to rise. Subsequently real estate agents set up business, followed by commercial developers and speculators, bringing development proposals that were often considered to be inappropriate development by the new settlers. As a result, after the very early years some new settlers spent considerable time defending the land and forests through active opposition. On the other hand, other new settlers recognised that their land was worth considerably more than they purchased it for, so they sold out and left or became developers themselves.

Alternative life-stylers with a philosophy of peace, happiness, love and libertarian child-focus started the school. They intended to create a participative, egalitarian community, which they envisioned as a big family. The first meetings were held in the late seventies and the school opened in the very early eighties. It actually started in a shed on a farm, which subsequently had a fire and became unusable. The present site was obtained by negotiating with the Beachtown shire, which lets the site to the school for an annual rent of a peppercorn. The first classes were held in the hall that was moved on to the site for class by parents, through fund-raising and much hard work. All the current buildings
were built as required by parents with comparatively little government funding.\(^4\) (In 1995, the local small town had three shops and a new petrol station and Beachtown had grown. The agricultural sector greatly expanded with a variety of different industries, especially wine, fruit and cheeses. A huge increase in tourism has produced significant commercial development and employment.) Below, James discusses the personal qualities of the early school parents.

Community things, "community unity", that we were involved with, you know? That was once a month, people getting together and dancing, having explorations in meditation and that kind of stuff. It was all based on community, because at that stage, we were all referred to as the "new settlers". We weren't really part of the farming community and we didn't have a lot of family down there, so everyone just kind of grouped together and the school was just tied in with that, I think.

*So the history of the school was very closely associated with the history of the counter culture?* (interviewer)

James: It was the new settlers, it was always the new settlers... I know that the first five or six [school] families, in the first three or four years, they were very alternative-based families. And I think that they were real intellectual families who were striving for more... you know, if there was a new age back in the 70's, then that was it. ... Casey and Cassie [other school parents] were into art and ...you know, it was a really loving environment. It was a different town. People had to join together to make things happen. I remember the first 'community unity" meeting, my brother's band played and everybody'd make food and people would just talk for 15 minutes about what they were doing, and we had guest speakers come down, chiropractors and health food people...it [community unity] must have gone on for a year or so at least.

*What other things were going on at the same time?* (interviewer)

The MoonShine Health Food people, ... they were part of that. The Jones were starting their own fruit and vegetable thing. The health food store was coming up. The "Good Food" vegetarian restaurant started in Beachtown... We were the "new settlers" as the shire referred to us. ...The school was just a natural extension of that lifestyle...They were the people living on the land. None of us could afford the school, really, but none of us could afford not to be involved. We were all just young families, just starting off (James, parent and part time teacher, 9 years intensive involvement in the school, which finished 6 years ago. He still maintains some involvement.)

Local farmers never considered that the school was likely to become a permanent establishment. This sentiment is still held by some farmers, as this quote shows:

\(^{4}\) The fact that the beautiful buildings were constructed with the very little grant funding is a source of great pride for several of the participants.
Mr Smithson, who has been a pillar of the community down there since the day dot and the [community service provider], still to this day, calls it the temporary school, in the hope… so things don't ever change, like that! (Dianne, parent, 14 years continuous involvement in the school, still intensively involved)

In the early days, non-participant local farmers most likely saw the school as a hippy refuge, a meeting place for the greenies (as Dianne says, who were supposedly otherwise busy standing in front of bulldozers). Dianne suggested that these greenies were often seen to come from other places and became resisters to the style of economic development that involved environmental destruction. She says that the greenies were probably vaguely feared, and were seen as a small but growing collection of outsiders whose presence would mean trouble of some kind. Several people described this phenomenon, captured by Dianne as follows:

"What do you mean, "it was a hippy school", or was that just an impression?" (interviewer)

That was just an impression, I think. Because most of them wore long flowing skirts and used patchouli oil, and had beads in their hair and people used to say to me: "why are you sending her down there, because all they do is smoke dope and wax their surf-boards!" (Dianne, 14 years continuous involvement in the school, parent)

James’s comment on hippies shows the context:

The people that were involved... they were hippies, but they were maybe a little conservative [accepted obligation]. They were well grounded. They could make it [their vision] happen. (James, parent and part time teacher, 9 years intensive involvement in the school, which finished 6 years ago. He still maintains some involvement.)

A significant number of people involved in the school community became involved in local environmental campaigns. Susan describes her perspective on local development and the strength of the environmental commitment with which another parent has participated in oppositional activities:

… development. Huge tracts of land being chopped up and just the city ideas that the shire have, you know, we'll just pump all the effluent into the water, it'll be all right. They've just built this huge great dam and it's only going to last 30 years. But that's not thinking far enough into the future. So they had all those wars.

"Did the dam go ahead?" (Interviewer)

Oh, yes, the dam's in. … I think people like Kath Smith spend a lot of their time fighting, and I worry for people like Kath, because I think she's
going to get to burn out level and then what? (Susan, parent, 12 years involvement in the school, which ended three years ago)

Dianne's longer term perspective as a third generation local illustrates the broader context of the school in the local area and the commercial development pattern:

I've been here for a long time. My mother was born here, my grandparents came here in 1926. It was their house that was knocked down here [at home], for us. So it's all been development for us. When [the first] group of alternative people came here, we all went: "oh, God, what's going to happen now?" Because it was a sleepy little mill town and dairying area. The first land that was split up close to the coast, was (............tape unclear). He went and bought Brickbank Backwoods, and split it into blocks and he did his research by asking the alternative people what they would buy. The developers were looking for opportunities.

*It's a paradox, isn't it? The greenies came down here and brought the developers with them, who they then had to subsequently fight against, and who ended up running them out of town.* (interviewer)

It would have been nice if they all could have come down and kept it a secret, but that doesn't happen. I don't blame them, I don't think for one moment that they encouraged in any way, or thought that they were encouraging them...... I think it's going to happen in other places, like it's happening in Moyranup, you know, land down there is getting expensive, now. (Dianne, 14 years continuous involvement in the school, parent)

Interestingly, Kath presents the view that the school means different things to different people, depending upon each one's own outlook on life. She comments that an ecological perspective concerns all aspects of one's life, if an individual is oriented to an ecological paradigm. She was responding to a question about the early development of the school. Kath indirectly refers to her personal transformation, which I think is also of significance in this vignette.

There was certainly an element of the alternative, but certainly not hippie or a "hippie-trippie" show, I mean anyone who can get a school together ...... I use "hippie" lightly, as people who just laze about and don't actually get beyond that, so no, I didn't see it in that light at all...

*When you became part of the school community, did you see that it was more green than you had perceived it?* (interviewer)

I didn't see it as green at all. I don't know what you really mean by green. Do you mean as a conservation school?

*Yes, in the broadest sense of the word.* (interviewer)

No, I didn't see it like that. Like I said, I didn't get tuned in to green myself until about three years ago. Maybe if I was like I am now and was looking for a school, I would actually view it in that light, but I didn't
have the green perspective that I do now. I think that once you have that
green perspective and incorporate it into your life, then it's very present
in everything. Now, I would look at it in that light but then, I didn't.

*So now, do you see the school as any kind of ecologically aware
establishment, in the way it runs, in the things the kids do, or...*
*(interviewer)*

Yes. There is definitely a concerted effort from most parents in the
school, and that comes from most parents being concerned about the
environment. (Kath, parent, 7 years at the school)

Participation in the changing history of the local area contributed to the development of
the character of the Forest School. The school commenced at the beginning of a period
of commercial development, much of which was opposed by a significant proportion of
parents. The parents supported and cared for each other and the children and developed
their ecological interest and campaign skills. At the same time the school developed part
of its character through opposition to ecologically unsustainable development. The CSO
(Community Service Orders) stories are a further, clearer example of the school's
oppositional position. Through the course of this research, several people gleefully told
me that in addition to the normal voluntary assistance at the school, certain parents
regularly 'worked off' their CSOs there. When a person is convicted of obstruction of a
legal activity by participating in non-violent civil disobedience, for example deliberately
obstructing a logging operation by chaining oneself to a bulldozer, the judge may hand
down a CSO as a penalty. Therefore a parent convicted in this way may be ordered to
spend from forty to one hundred hours working at the school at the discretion of the
principal! Everyone felt this was an outstanding use of the CSO because the activist
work was doubly useful! In this way, the CSO assigns status to the activist, and by the
high degree of acceptance extended to the convicted environmental campaigners as
CSO workers, the school also takes an oppositional stance to unsustainable
development.

Altogether, the school community was a focus for the education and nurture of the
children, for the nurture, support and community of parents, and expression of
compassion for nature. In addition, by default, it took an oppositional position against
unreasonable economic development. This subsection has illustrated the intention of the
original school families to develop a school community underpinned by mutual support
and care, a strong sense of community connectedness, a commitment to work hard to
achieve their purpose and a connectedness to nature. This was reinforced by strong support of individual members who were engaged in oppositional practices against development that was seen to be unreasonable destruction of nature.

6.2.2 Communitarian Ideals - and - Disappointments

Communitarian Ideals into Practice

In terms of their community, all Forest School participants who I interviewed held a philosophy underpinned by communitarian ideas. That is, everyone sought to develop a healthy school community. The vignettes chosen below illustrate this quite clearly. The resulting community-oriented process was empowering for the community and for individual participants. The vignettes in this subsection illustrate a learning orientation towards community. Key concepts here are compassion, networks of mutual support and responsibility. To begin, Taneeka describes the joy of being an individual part of a functional, effective, responsive community.

It’s like "we are doing this". There are no [pre-set] rules up there. We all, as a group, even with the teachers, we all work for the children, or we all work for the future, or whatever. It's that, this school is unique and each person changes it. Somebody comes, somebody goes, it's like this dynamic thing that has this enormous potential. I feel I am taking my own responsibility and from that you have so many positives. (Taneeka, parent, 8 years involvement at the school, still involved)

Kath extends Taneeka's description, in describing the learning aspect of the community. Everyone who participated in the community learned about community while participating as an interdependent individual.

It began a path of learning that I really enjoyed. I think I might have got more out of it than they [children] did [laugh]. It's just been really an eye-opener, for lots of reasons. The biggest thing is being involved with a group that has a similar purpose. There are lots of parallels, but everyone has their own particular wheelbarrow. And so watching how a group can work together has been a really big thing for me. I feel that I've learned heaps, understanding how people work and how people work in groups. … I've always been intrigued by that, how one person out of that group can change the whole energy of it. One person can really influence that. That's been really interesting, watching how a bunch of parents can all come together, and can actually make it work. (Kath, parent, 7 years at the school, still involved)

The parents shared the experience of growing and maturing as individuals, through the
social experience of community while their children grew up in community. While talking about the history of the community, James referred to the "growing up of the parents". He was describing the life-stage of the parents and the learning and growing together aspect of the community, for themselves as well as the children.

All these young 20s families were all starting to survive. Entertaining each other. The school was like the natural growing up of the parents, wanting to extend that thing to their children (James, parent and part time teacher, 9 years intensive involvement in the school, which finished 6 years ago. He still maintains some involvement.)

For those who accept the responsibility, the energy requirement of the school is tremendous, but the resultant synergies and sense of personal reward are of equal magnitude:

The school itself generates the energy to go beyond it. Other times we are so busy just running the school that you never see beyond. It's just like a dog that you are just feeding into, you know? Other times it really shines by itself and it is a glorious thing and we can put all our energy into outgoing things, put on this huge theatre production that we ran, for example. It put our whole school in a very good light and we were very proud of ourselves. We watched this performance by our kids and all the stage work and all the costumes and the Town Hall full of people. I almost had tears in my eyes, it was wonderful just watching it happen. That is going beyond the school and showing the rest of the community what we can do as well, and the community appreciating it. Something worth working to. (Frank, parent and part time teacher, 8 years involvement in the school)

Most parents described a similar pride in the children’s achievement while using the metaphor of family to describe the community. They feel pride in the children's achievement as a personal experience of collective pride. These vignettes by Frank and James, were spoken with and reflect love and 'glowing pride'.

I always felt that I was rewarded by final ceremonies. The things that the kids did on the final day: the way they performed, the way they did their acrobatics, the things that were going on at school that I did nothing about, the final day always made me cry. I couldn't believe that these kids were doing what they were doing. They dressed up, you'd think it was so corny, they wrote this whole thing, 32 pages long. I panicked that they wouldn't remember their lines, but they were great. This particular play, when it was on, every kid mimicked every other kid. They knew every other kid’s line. We couldn't believe how brilliant the kids and the parents were. We had seen them progress over the years and all of a sudden they were playing violins, making costumes and it wasn't some kids, it was all the kids. And that's the big difference from the public school. There were just too many kids [in the state school]: they couldn't
be organised properly. At Forest School, it's a family: every kid has high self-esteem and so on. That's the joy of being involved with Forest School, seeing the kids who have left the school and they are running the store, working wherever and they are such lovely kids, so confident, just like family. (James, parent and part time teacher, 9 years intensive involvement in the school, which finished 6 years ago. He still maintains some involvement.)

Functional communities comprise networks of mutual support based upon compassion. Frank's example of Barry and Francine's stepping back for a while illustrates the giving and taking, the mutual support and compassion, which is essential to community balance:

… Francine [will] have a baby soon. She has pulled out of a lot of things in the community. Like, "I'm not going to take this job on this year, I am going to be very busy, very centred". Barry himself says, "at a certain time, I have to cut off, I can't do anything more. We will have a busy time, we will have a baby, we will be working too hard". It has to be an unspoken rule, that everyone is entitled to receive nurturing, make sure they are all right. Some one dies, others need help. (Frank, 8 years involvement in the school)

In functional participative school communities, there is a huge amount of 'giving out' required. I shall call this 'unconditional personal responsibility'. The following quotes about responsibility illustrate the notion of unconditional personal responsibility for aspects of community.

So we accepted responsibility ourselves. I do sometimes hear other people's expectation of the school, or other groups like the community [Gaiaville], but I always think it's dangerous to have expectations of an institution, even of a family school. (Frank, 8 years involvement in the school)

I suggest that this notion of unconditional personal responsibility is an extremely important attitude in a school community. It is through this attitude of unconditional and constant 'giving away' of love, care, nurture, assistance and time that the school community builds its collective 'spirit'. This is the heart of the "school with a heart" James spoke of earlier. For many of Forest School's participants this 'giving' has been able to be limitless. It does not mean limitless work however. Taking on more than a reasonable share of work can cause extensive and deep problems, which I shall describe in the next section. The participants deeply wanted to bring about a caring, loving community culture, the idea of which many individuals connected to broader planetary repair. 'Being' in this resulting community was deeply rewarding and joyful as well as
being nurturing for themselves. All of the informants I spoke with did not do it for the reward, however. They simply did it because they wanted to 'love' outwards - they wanted to build a loving, spirit-filled 'school with a heart' for their children and themselves.

Over the years, this school community has developed procedures to be followed, to facilitate the intention of task achievement. The following quote illustrates a procedural requirement, to implement an idea upon acceptance of responsibility for it:

it is quite clear that if you as a parent want something to happen at the school, like sex education, you can make it happen. You might get a parent to do it, or you might hire someone else. It's the parents who do it. It's the parents who bring a subject up, who hires someone, who do it.

So what if you want to bring something up, how would you go about doing it? (interviewer)

I would talk about it at the co-ordinating committee level first, or might even by-pass that, go to the full council. But I would actually discuss it with the parents first; get a bit of a feel for it. Then I would go to the full council and talk it over, and more often someone would have a solution: "oh, I know someone who would do that". We'd find something, until the next meeting. (Frank, 8 years involvement in the school)

There are many types of learning required by individuals involved in the building and maintaining of a functional school community. These are skills such as social or technical skills, conceptual learning such as the learning required to understand community dynamics and processes, and the transformation of values and attitudes, which accompanies the concept and skill learning. Further, there is the learning about the self - one's tolerance, capacities and limits. Frank described some of these different learning requirements and contexts:

The other thing is really an intrinsic thing, I think, rather than a material one. When you participate in the school as a teacher's aide, you learn an awful lot. When you explain things to the kids, you learn a lot. I think we are all learning a lot, besides learning about running the school. Speaking for myself, I [have been] on the co-ordinating committee in the past, maintenance, building, applying for grants, landscape designs... We are learning a lot. Learning about organisations: I've been a director, been a director of a company, you know...!, I've been a secretary of directors, I've done quite a few jobs. I've convened meetings. A lot of [non Forest School] people do not get access to these skills, because the opportunities do not arise. You do not need to own a Rolls Royce to be a director - you may need to go to meetings on your bicycle, but you are a director of a company... So, I don't know whether all the people at the school share the
same vision. One of the good things about this project, is that we will find out more about ourselves! (Frank, parent and part time teacher, 8 years involvement in the school, still involved. Frank's emphasis)

Frank's words highlight the size of the task of running this school and about his own attitude to the necessity of learning in the community. Below, Kath describes the learning of facilitation skills and the importance of everyone learning these procedures in order to facilitate the implementation of participatory decision-making.

I would be fascinated to know, when your research comes out, what makes it work, what makes it continue. I guess my feeling is that certainly an open meeting procedure, where people feel welcome. I'm actually facilitating meetings at the moment and I'm not very happy with the way I've been doing it. We used to always make sure that we have a round robin as a first step, because once everyone had spoken, then they will be ready to speak … Facilitating is fairly critical to how things actually run, because if you get good facilitation skills, and everyone understands facilitation procedure, then the meetings begin to open out… I have a feeling that facilitation is exceedingly vital, so that people feel that they have got something to contribute. (Kath, parent, 7 years involvement in the school)

My answer to Kath's question to me about what makes it work is two fold. Firstly I think that the spirit of intention and learning that underpins the school's operations is very significant. In participatory decision-making all of the attributes mentioned to this point are extremely important - the unconditional personal responsibility, the attitude of constant learning, compassion, care and mutual support together with effective procedures. Compare Kath’s description (above) to James’s below, to gauge the huge amount of community learning that had come to pass. James was one of the first facilitators.

It was pretty relaxed, well, everything had its ups and downs, but the meetings tended to last too long because there wasn’t a format for the meetings. There was always, maybe a semi-lack of leadership, because I mean I chaired the meetings for three years, but there was just an unwillingness to go by standard meeting protocol. (James, parent and part time teacher, 9 years intensive involvement in the school, which finished 6 years ago. He still maintains some involvement.)

The community learning from James's facilitation to Kath's had been considerable. Kath was the facilitator of the co-ordinating committee at the time of research, whilst James was facilitator during the very early years of the school. Ten years had passed in between. Their contexts were quite different - in the time of James's facilitation, there
were less than fifteen families whereas there were over thirty families by the time Kath was facilitating. At the time of the research my data showed that the community had evolved a sophisticated non-hierarchical participative democracy system that allowed all community members to participate in decision-making to the degree of involvement they wished. Current (long term) parents had described the structure and procedures.

The structure comprises a 'typical', extremely suitable circular, cooperative participatory model which considers the importance of contribution by all participants and takes account of the problem of over-participation by a few. This idea seemed to be the intention of the early parents, however in the early days of the school, information on non-hierarchical decision-making structures was not readily available so they had to 'invent' it. They were opposed to 'standard' officious meetings procedures, which they simply substituted with a laissez-faire, relaxed, circular procedure. Although the disadvantage of their procedure was its time consumption, by and large this was not perceived to be a problem - therefore this was not a problem in the early days. In operating a participative community school, particularly in times of expansion many organisational and policy decisions are required in order to manage the organisation responsively and effectively.

This is the second part of my answer to Kath's question about what makes the community work. I agree with Kath's own answer - the open meeting structure, but I think it is more than that. What makes the system sophisticated is at least twofold. The practical knowledge about the process and about community that participants have gained through participation in the open meeting structure as well as through reflective, dialogical participation in all aspects of the community generally, certainly contributes towards the sophistication of this participatory system. The second element that adds to the system's sophistication is the participants' spirit of contribution and their interpersonal community skills. That is, their capacity to relate to each other in supportive, caring ways. I am suggesting that the system works not just because of the structure or the procedures, but also because of the qualities of the people themselves.

Being in community does not mean that there is always an agreeable resolution to issues. In the quotation below, Dianne answers a question about her own personal
transformation as a result of participation in the school. She talks about learning to disagree agreeably, or speak her mind clearly:

I wondered what your values and attitudes as a person are. You're talking about the Forest School people as if they were (once, at least) different. Are they still? Have you changed at all? (interviewer)

Yeah, I think I have changed. I tend to let a lot of things slide, now, that I used to get cross about. Things that I didn't really approve of, especially other parents’ attitudes. Now I'll sort of think, I can still have a different opinion to someone else, but I can agree to disagree, agreeably. So that if Frank's got a terribly different idea about things, to what I have, some things, and I used to think "oh, he's so wrong", but now I'll think, I'll disagree with him and it doesn't mean that his kids and mine can't go to the same school, and I'll still care for his kids, and he can still care for mine. If any conflict comes up, with that, depending on what it is, they get a taste of what I think, and I assume they'll do the same. (Dianne, 14 years continuous involvement in the school, parent)

James answers a similar question unequivocally:

So the parents grew at the same time as Forest School? (interviewer)

Oh, yeah, absolutely. The parents learned a lot more than the children ever learned (laugh).

In what sorts of things? (Interviewer)

Everything. Interaction, structure, being efficient, being honest and open, mixing with people, dealing with the community… (James, parent and part time teacher, 9 years intensive involvement in the school, which finished 6 years ago. He still maintains some involvement.)

As Frank says, there are sometimes parent wishes that cannot be met so the parents who accept responsibility for their children’s education always have the choice to implement the project for their own children at home:

But there are of course a lot of things that someone brings up that are not taken up, because they are too difficult to solve for the school, in which case as a parent you have the choice to pursue yourself. Ultimately, as a parent, you feel strongly that you want your children to learn something, and others too, of course, but I think you naturally feel stronger about your own children and you also have the choice to do it yourself. (Frank, parent and part time teacher, 8 years involvement in the school)

This subsection has illustrated the on-going learning and depth of commitment, mutual support, compassion and unconditional personal responsibility, which is necessary, accompanied by dedicated hard work. These are necessary in order to lead to the empowerment, synergies and joy of participation in community - to build a school with
a heart, or community spirit. There is considerable evidence of the transformation that took place for participants during the time of their involvement in the school community. But, there is a catch! To this point, the discussion may seem unreasonably utopian. Words like joy, synergy and empowerment even accompanied by hard physical work, only describe part of the experience of community. For most people these words do not fully describe their experience. It seems that the experience of dysfunction is a normal and I dare to say a healthy part of the cyclical evolution and growth of the community.

**Community Dysfunction**

**Individual Burn-out and Voluntary Work-load Imbalance**

From my experience in the variety of research projects conducted for this dissertation, burnout is one of the major problems for participative community schools. Part of the problem is that in severe cases it can be totally denied by the afflicted person, to themselves in particular, since others with participative community experience can often identify the problem. As a community participant-researcher in several of the research projects, I felt very connected to two people with severe burnout. The complication was that in both cases they were surrounded by other people with burnout but perhaps not so advanced. In both cases severe pain was caused to themselves and to the community. As has been said many times to this point, operating a participative community school is a tremendous amount of work. In addition to the work, or perhaps because of the work it can be extremely stressful. The stress needs to be shared and dealt with effectively.

Frank raises the problem of burnout as a form of community dysfunction:

I feel in hindsight that the people who did work on the school all the time, put a lot of time into it, often went until burnout occurred, then maybe split and bad-mouthed the whole thing then. "No-one's doing [the work, other than me]..." … Over the years, awareness grows that it shouldn't be a couple of people to do that [large task being discussed], because in the meantime we have experienced burnouts, which are really damaging to the whole group. Not only is this person physically burnt out and really unhappy about everything, then it usually happens that this person leaves the school, drags their kids out of the school, and usually the kids haven't had anything to do with it anyway, but then maybe their two friends decide that this is a good time to jump ship as well. We had a situation like that, and we had to pick up the pieces and we said well, in a way it's our own fault that this happened. We put too much --- no, the
burn out people are the ones who take too much on themselves, it's not that we put too much on them, but we said we should have recognised that this person was burning out, the signs were on the wall for a whole year, you know? All the reactions to problems, the way they talked to people, little rumours blow up into a huge issue, and you know there is something happening. You need to immediately take the workload off these people, but often these people can't help it, see, as soon as they've got the workload off themselves, they take it on again straight away, something else. Okay, no more co-ordinating committee, but now "I'm doing all the fund-raising…. And no one in the group is allowed to do anything, except me". They are the situations where people burn out. We need to protect these people, re-educate them. (Frank, parent and part time teacher, 8 years involvement in the school.)

There is great need for compassion and care of burnout people, but paradoxically it seems that the worse the case of burnout, the less likely the person is to accept help. In addition it so happens that they may have upset so many people in the process of burnout that no one is eager to assist them. They seem to manufacture the perpetuation and spiralling down of their own demise. Further and again paradoxically, it is often much more difficult to do the same work collaboratively since there needs to be agreement about process at each point. Comparatively simple (but often lengthy) tasks can become complex cooperative scenarios but when one person does the job there is an easily achieved outcome. In James’ words:

*So others have a responsibility to support everyone else in the group as well?* (interviewer)

Yes. It's a great learning curve for everyone. We can't just sit back and let it all happen, always feeding one person with all the work. The big experience is working in the group. It's just amazing how clever we all appear to be, and yet when we come back to the group and do it together, a lot of us realise that it's a lot more difficult to work something out to satisfy everyone, spread the workload evenly, act as a group, as a community. This is a wonderful achievement. (James, parent and part time teacher, 9 years intensive involvement in the school, which finished 6 years ago. He still maintains some involvement.)

There are many reasons for school communities entering a phase of dysfunction. Ineffective balancing of workloads leading to burnout on the one hand and often, low participation on the other hand is one of the reasons. Frank addresses the problem of low participation:

There is always something to be done around the school and it's always the same people who do it. I'm getting to the stage myself, where I say: "no, someone else can". No, I'm careful not to say someone else, because
that's the old cliché, "someone else can do it", but I feel it is very important that everyone carries his or her weight. ... I believe from the school history that there was always some people who got a "free ride", who just sent their kids there and maybe were not in tune with everything. Maybe they ignored the calls to come and help, the busy bees etc. I believe there are always a small percentage of people like that and sometimes a greater percentage. (Frank, parent and part time teacher, 8 years involvement in the school)

The ideal of participation in community events is to build up community cohesiveness and nurture relationships rather than simply to complete work cheaply. However this ideal is often difficult to sustain, as families go through stages when they are focused on other-than-school aspects of their lives. For community schools, balancing community work is an on-going problem. The funding issue sometimes compounds the problem because government grants for independent schools are on a per-child basis.

The challenge for the community is to keep children's enrolment numbers at an agreed-to level to sustain sufficient funding to continue paying staff and facilities while enabling participants to intrinsically 'want to' participate effectively in the spirit and practice of community. Every answer to this challenge is met with a counter challenge. For example insisting on a required number of voluntary hours may cause the departure (or non-enrolment in the first place) of families who feel that their attendance should not be conditional. On the other hand a non-requirement or low requirement of voluntary work may cause disenchantment and feelings of injustice in those who accept a considerable voluntary workload. Further, there is the issue of money and equity, which Frank refers to, below:

But in general, if you say, "you don't have to come to the busy-bee, just give us $50.00", then people with the money can say, "oh, I don't have to be part of this community at all, I can just pay, I can pay my way in". (Frank, parent and part time teacher, 8 years involvement in the school)

This sub-section has drawn attention to the real problem of the balancing of the work in running a community school which can cause problems of burn-out or under participation, both of which can lead to dysfunction and chaos. Peck (1987) sees community as a stage from pseudo-community, through chaos and emptiness to 'genuine community'. He writes that communities can regress into any of the stages at any time. When in a period of chaos it is very difficult to see it as a 'stage' however, particularly when families depart. The collective morale can quickly dissipate when families leave due to dispute or unresolved stress. These days because of funding issues
the threat of school closure is an omni-present, cold reality. This would not have been a problem for the pioneers of Forest School. The parents would undoubtedly have run the school completely voluntarily as they did at the very beginning, should they have faced a problem of non-compliance with funding conditions. This is a much less viable alternative now, with larger numbers of children and paid staff as well as organisational systems to be maintained.

A Critical Incident

In addition to the issues described above, innumerable small occurrences can suddenly, instantly even, take the warmth and pride from the sense of community leaving a feeling of cold panic or fear in its place. A particular incident that I recorded and sought multiple perspectives on was a teacher-student incident that caused shock waves, which were felt for months after the event. The following story was told by Jeremy, a fifteen year old boy describing a memorable event in his primary school experience:

One of the teachers started physically pushing me round. I was just scared.

*What was he doing? (interviewer)*

He just picked me up and pushed me into the corner.

*Picked up your body? (interviewer)*

Yeah. It didn't hurt, though, I was just scared, very scared.

*Did you go back the next day?*

Yeah, I went every day, I was never sick very often.

*What grade were you in? (interviewer)*

Six. He wasn't a good teacher, no-one would let him teach at the school again. He had lots of great ideas, but he would never carry them through. Like he would start something and he'd never finish it. Like an Indian tepee. We just didn't finish it.

*What happened after the pushing? (interviewer)*

He was OK, he just lost his temper for a while. There was lots of huffing and puffing with the other teachers and parents.

*How did it all seem to you? (interviewer)*

I sort of did deserve it a bit.

*No-one deserves violence! (interviewer)*

Not for just a smart-alec comment or something. I just said something and he lost it. … I don't fight any more. (Jeremy, fifteen years old at the time of the interview)
This incident produced severe division in the community because it directly affronted the vision of peaceful education. The incident was severely incongruous with the spirit of cooperation and care that underpinned the school -- it wasn't meant to happen! The shock waves from the incident seemed to have a greater magnitude than the incident itself (which is often the case). The issue proved extremely difficult to resolve with different groups becoming attached to their own preferred solution. There was a wide range of reactions. Some felt that the teacher should have been dismissed immediately because no teacher reaction of this nature could be tolerated at all. Some felt that he should continue but not have his contract renewed when it lapsed at the end of the year. This position acknowledged the interruption it would cause to the children's education. Others felt empathy for the teacher, seeing some justification in the teacher's angry response or excusing it as a human error, which alone did not deserve dismissal.

The situation deteriorated badly and several whole community meetings were held which could not satisfactorily resolve the problem. The community felt divided first by the conflict and then by words spoken to each other in the heat of the moment in the exhaustion of late night meetings. Over the months morale deteriorated. School functioned as normal and events continued as usual. After these kinds of occurrences the spirit of community sometimes seems to depart. Using Peck (1987), the community went into chaos immediately but then reverted to pseudo-community. Politeness and ordinariness were present but not the spontaneity and delight that was there before the incident. The issue remained unsatisfactorily resolved until the end of the year when the teacher left. The teacher did not apply to have his contract renewed, which relieved the problem. The community returned to a normal, more 'spiritful' community functioning during the course of the following year.

Some people such as teachers and very dedicated parents may stay with a community school for many years. Forest School has several such people. However, primary schools are available to children for only eight or nine years (including pre-school and kindergarten), and most community school participants are intensely involved only for the time their children attend the school. This means that there is a continually evolving community with new parents coming in and others leaving each year. Therefore there
are always people in different stages of their learning about community. The people who are very experienced have developed the 'practical knowing' about chaos and the understanding that it will be a passing phase. They have learned the capacity to deal with it, perhaps dealing with the dissonance as Dianne described earlier by being able to disagree agreeably and continue to operate effectively and happily without prejudice to others or children. However the less experienced community learners cannot always do this and may feel great pain and disillusionment with a situation, which for them was not satisfactorily resolved. With an understanding of learning about community in the context of community, it follows that participants need to have taken part in several cycles of community including several phases of chaos, before having a practical knowing of the cycles themselves. This experience seems to allow participants to deal with chaos without a felt sense of deep personal loss at the loss of community spirit. Participating in the community of a school can be a very sobering undertaking.

6.2.3 Community Reproduction

The Changing of the Guard: Change, Conflict, and Renewal

As the school grew in numbers the school community needed to find more formal, visible ways of achieving the same participatory democratic objectives in a shorter, more efficient time frame. Whilst the original group had found informal ways of learning together to run the school, the ‘second wave’ of parents found this untenable because an increase in the volume of work accompanied the new people. This was due to the necessity for extra funding for extra buildings and equipment and then the construction of the new buildings (as well as every task simply taking much longer due to the extra children). The group now needed improved efficiency to manage the workload. Further and perhaps more significantly the new group did not feel included in the sense of community cohesion shared by the old. The change that happened became known as 'the changing of the guard'. It happened seven to eight years after the school began. This quote from Kath reflects the lack of inclusion of the new people in the sense of community:

75 In December 2001, twenty years after the school commenced, at least one of the original families are still active parent-members of the community and at least one other family is still active in the school. The current school coordinator has worked at the school for seventeen years.
I have always felt very happy with the school, except when I first arrived, it was in upheaval. (Kath, parent, 7 years involvement in the school)

The first group, now called 'the old guard', did not necessarily all agree that the original meeting procedures were efficient however the strong philosophical commitment to the principles jelled the group together. For example:

…it was frustrating at times, because you'd be there for three hours and you'd want to get some things accomplished and things weren't getting accomplished, you know, not to some people's requirements, but everything always worked, you know? In the end it was always together, but some people were a little more impatient than others. I think every chairperson there had the same problem. Well, there are records there, but we were just learning and leadership really hadn't taken and we did what we had to do to make it work, without putting all the restrictions on it. We didn't have a pecking order and we got on with our principle and all of that kind of stuff. Real hard core...it obviously worked…. (James, parent and part time teacher, 9 years intensive involvement in the school, which finished 6 years ago. He still maintains some involvement.)

This school-as-community has, at different times in its history, had significant struggle with the learning of community process. Sometimes conflict has been very effectively resolved resulting in collective clarity, purpose and successful endeavour. At other times it has not been effectively resolved, causing pain and confusion. Most of the time, effective resolutions are made and progress is made in implementation and community building.

I shall stress that most of the time the community is functional and effective. Infrequently however, conflict and individual pain can cause a ‘spiralling down’ into collective pain, causing a regression into a state resembling Scott Peck’s community building stage of chaos and community dysfunction. Although these events are infrequent they tend to be all consuming and if they are prolonged, they inevitably result in attrition and lack of confidence in the community’s capacity for social sustainability. In this state, a school community cannot reproduce its community cohesiveness and strong spirit since the factor of agency is perceived by the individuals to be constrained (using the work of Fien, 1993, 90).

The stage of emptiness which follows the chaos is often a stage of quiet, in preparation for a return to functional community. This is illustrated by ‘new guard’ member Kath,
who illustrates a successfully resolved deep rift in the first changing of the guard. She speaks eloquently so I shall not interrupt or interpret her words.

The problems [inherent in the changing of the guard] seemed to be communication. The system wasn't in place then for good communication. Out of all of that dilemma came a process of proper communication. It was all around conflict and conflict resolution. And what we did was get a couple in to do a weekend workshop, which broke the back of it. 85% of parents were there and we learned much. We did conflict resolution work, which I think most people had never done. I think the only problem was, that we were not hearing each other, giving each other the respect. There was one person who was really strong, too. It's interesting that one person can have a lot of impact on the group. When I think about it, it was a transition, because the old guard, as they were called, the originals in the school, were actually on the verge of leaving the school, as their kids were on the way out of the school. So all the new parents who had come in more recent years were actually now the dominant force in the school and yet the old guard, because they were the original people in the school, still had very much the control. They were seen to be the ones who knew what was happening. I think because of that, they were right in the middle of the changeover point between and there was no real process in place, because the parents before hadn't ever needed it. But now the school had got bigger, there were a whole lot of new people in the school who didn't have the original vision, they all had different visions, now and it was like all this stuff, and we didn't have any processes to deal with it. (I think that's the point when we came into the school.) So what happened was, we actually set up the co-ordinating committee. We used to always have meetings where the whole school had to get together to make every decision about every issue, which of course is a huge task. Even setting up the co-ordinating committee, there has always been this resistance to any sort of power structure. Fear, it was fear that we were getting back into the old hierarchical approach, which a lot of people, at some level, even if they weren't aware of it, didn't want. I think because of the lack of awareness about it.... there was always a lack of awareness of where people were coming from, it was like intuitively, people knew what they wanted, but didn't know why. Anyway, even though it was a lot of work, the co-ordinating committee, eventually we did get it passed and we did get it running and that made a lot of difference, because that meant that six people could make most of the decisions, of just the running of the school, and didn't have to incorporate the whole of the school. There were certain agreements about what decisions needed to go to the full council. The full council meets twice a term, the co-ordinating committee meets twice a term. There are actually four meetings a term. (Kath, parent, 7 years at the school)

James and Stephanie below give an old guard perspective on the same issue. Their piece seems a little sad. The old guard had worked so terribly hard setting the school up and
developing informal procedures to suit their philosophies. Despite their enthusiasm and energy, the new guard were a little naïve about the dynamics of community. They had not yet had their chance to learn these dynamics. I could certainly understand if some of the old guard felt put-down by the insinuations of the new guard. However not one of the old guard said anything like that to me. I was interviewing them approximately seven years after the changing of the guard events and their conversation only reflected the learning that they had incorporated into their lives. For each of the old guard I spoke to (twelve people) the school was seen as a time in their lives of love, unconditional personal responsibility and happiness which they shared with their children. The pain of conflict and chaos seemed to have been dissolved and incorporated into their overall wisdom about community. I did not interview the family which left due to burnout however, or their two friends who Frank reported 'jumped ship' at the same time. Again, in reporting the following vignette I shall not interpret or interrupt, in this case James and Stephanie. They speak eloquently.

... were you aware of the old-guard/new guard thing? (interviewer)

(James): We went through all that, yeah. They were dealing with that for the last couple of years before we left. There was new energy in the school, and stuff like that and it was a thing that people used to...The people who wanted the change were the new guard and the people who were happy with the flow of things were the old guard, sort of thing. I think a lot of that was spurred on by the fact that the old guard were pretty relaxed about it all. It had worked up till now, and

(Stephanie): It was time to get a little more serious.

(James): That's what a lot of the other parents wanted, just to be a little more efficient when it came to .... To get grants and all that, you had to be efficient. So the school just got efficient. It was efficient before, though, it was always efficient.

(Stephanie): It was...the first core of parents thought so similarly, and they were all striving to just make it happen, and get it going, and do all the right things, and then when we got all the new energy, it was just like...it got real diversified, and so

(James): If you can say the old guard, the old guard was burnt out. The new guard wanted things to happen, and after you've been there for five or six years, and put in years of hard work, that a lot of the old guard, if you could call them that, virtually sat back, and said: "well, if you're so enthusiastic, make it happen". And that was really the attitude. If you want to make it happen, you make it happen. (James, parent and part time teacher, 9 years intensive involvement in the school, which finished 6 years ago. He still maintains some involvement, and Stephanie, parent, 9
years intensive involvement in the school, which finished 6 years ago. She still maintains some involvement)

Interviewer: And then they made it happen, but it was different to what the old guard thought....

James describes the changing of the guard as a learning experience for the old guard and contrasts their learning and routine with the new, more energetic and vocal group, below:

The enthusiasm was there to take it to the next level, but the people who'd been there for a while, they had a bit of experience, they knew, they saw these ideas that these people were yelling about, but the reality is that we have to get the finance, to get this, to make that, we have teachers that we have to deal with, we have structure, we can change the structure constantly, but you've got to have the foundation. So it was always like, "okay, here we go". Maybe it was all a bit cynical and stuff like that, sometimes, but... it all worked. Sometimes we had to let go. I remember talking to Jo-Anne Smith about different things, she had to let go, we all let go and other people took the rein.

So you actually responded to the criticism you were getting towards your "hanging on"? So people consciously and subconsciously let go? (interviewer)

Yeah. And a lot of the new parents were very pointed. They let the people who'd been there for a while know, it was like: "We got good ideas, we want to make them happen". In the end, the people who were there, they said: "Well, which canoe do you want to run? Okay, take over. You're the secretary, you're the treasurer", and that's what letting go was, letting somebody who maybe had different ideas take the reins, just to say: "Go for it".

You've talked about the learning that happened within the first group: the learning as people, and as a community, about living as a community member. The new people who came in didn't have experience as part of the community. Was part of the conflict about that? Does that partly explain the pushiness? (interviewer)

Absolutely. Maybe the hard core that were there, maybe it was ego or something like that, but we were a little bit tough, tougher than we needed to be. But it had been successful, and maybe we were a little conservative, like I said. Once it was going, it was on this path.... We weren't consciously doing this, but maybe subconsciously we were just trying to mould them into the clay, and let their colour take part of what it was going to be. If a person came in that was dynamic, like Kath, and when the Ganderton's got involved, they were really in there, you could see their influence was instantly there. (James, parent and part time teacher, 9 years intensive involvement in the school, which finished 6 years ago. He still maintains some involvement.)
There are a range of issues, which arise within the community, which can present problems. At the time of the research interviews it was seven years after the first changing of the guard. Because of the richness of the description of the changing of the guard, I was very sensitive to issues around cliquiness. Dianne described her perception of cliquiness at the present time (of the research):

There are actually groups of people at Forest School that do socialise together… [When a problem comes up] I don't think a lot of Forest School parents [talk to the teachers about it], a lot of them shut up and say nothing and hope it goes away, or they do a lot of talking to other people in the community which is not good for the school, or they go to the school all fired up, and they are too angry to achieve very much.

*What do you mean by groups?* (interviewer)

Well, there are groups of friends, and also there are groups of people who consider themselves, for some reason, the old group and the new group [of parents]. And I just will not buy into it; I refuse to go into it. Good luck to them. I can glean information from both groups of people, from anyone, and I'm not going to buy into all that stuff, at all, and I think it's not good for the school at all.

*I wonder why it's happened?* (interviewer)

I think a lot of people have seen that they can use the school as a platform for ideas, and I think some people like the idea of the power, you know? At the meetings I've seen that a few of them like the power. But it splits the school. (Dianne, parent, 14 years continuous involvement in the school)

I pursued this idea with Kath. By the time of a particular interview with Kath (cited next), as an observer researcher I had become deeply connected to the Forest School, by listening to the variety of stories and looking for frameworks to understand them with. I was developing a sense that the second changing of the guard may have been imminent. In my proposition about the second changing, Kath would have been seen as one of the second group of 'old guard'. I put this proposition to Kath, who would not even consider the idea! In the social history of communities, it is definitely hindsight that is clearest. I was not convinced by her response, but when I present the school with this completed research and she reads my comments, I shall ask her again!

*Some people have mentioned that there are in-groups and out-groups, so that there isn't a cohesive feeling any more. They have told me that it is only this year and last year that this has been marked. Do you feel that?* (interviewer)

No. Someone said that to me, and I thought: "I don't know that at all".
Maybe it's the old and the new, with the new feeling excluded. You may also have, without realising it, taken on the attitudes and values of the original old guard, and be standing in for them, so now be standing for the tradition of the school, whereas the newer ones don't understand?

(interviewer)

I don't have any sense of that at all. (Kath, parent, 7 years at the school)

Later, Kath said:

… like I said, I see the process as set up to function, and basically I don't get caught up in any other stuff that's going on. I just don't listen, I just don't attract it. People don't tell me stuff, because I'm just not interested. I would just say, just go through the procedure you need to take. (Kath, parent, 7 years at the school)

Nonetheless, the contrast in perceptions about cliquiness between Kath and Dianne is very interesting from a research perspective. The interviewer question to Kath about her being part of the second ‘old guard’ was prompted by Kath’s own (earlier) description of the ‘seven year changing of the guard’ at the school. At the time Dianne had been at the school for fourteen of the school’s fifteen years and had been part of the first ‘changing of the guard’ as an old guard. She had ‘seen it all before’. Kath had come in at the ‘changing of the guard’ as the ‘new’. In her assessment, other than the confusion about the change that was happening when she first began, the school had run quite well with the formalised structures and processes arising from the change. I am very interested in Kath’s words: "I just don't listen, I just don't attract it". They contrast quite starkly with Kath's own description of the changing of the guard, during which she said the main issue was communication. She insists that there are procedures for people to use to process their queries or ideas.

Not listening is an effective way to put boundaries around the workload of the facilitator's role. At the same time a habit of not listening can also lead to the overlooking of very important community information. Compare her words to James's who said, in referring to the first changing of the guard: "they saw these ideas that these people were yelling about, but the reality is…” The old guard peers he is referring to did not listen either! The first changing of the guard was notoriously difficult. Perhaps the next changing might be less difficult because this time, there are procedures and structures in place to be changed, rather than invented for the first time. Kath explained in more detail:
I guess what's happened for me, over the years, is that I feel I understand why the school works, and I feel that's because of the process that was set in place. I'll just accept that. The process is interesting now, and if there are any queries, I'll say well let's change the process. It's like; the process is what makes something flow. OK, so we've got this process in place, now if there are any problems, we've got a structure to deal with problems. If there is any conflict in the school, there is a structure in place for people to actually deal with it. So people who are feeling unheard, have got a procedure to go through. And maybe that needs to be made clearer. (Kath, parent, 7 years involvement in the school)

The message in this subsection has been the importance of a good balance between listening and receptiveness and procedural/structural processes in effective community school operation. The space where Dianne and Kath agree on this point is with the issue of new parents and the importance of communication. Kath says:

It's interesting, because I think one of the weaknesses is, we've always had difficulty getting information, clearly, to people. [For example], we've just introduced the idea of parents who are coming into the school actually meeting with Taneeka and Trudy, and talking to them about all the things that they need to understand, before they come in. But of course, new parents coming in, ...it took me two years to get settled, to know what's going on. It does take a long time, to really understand. It's like any group; you need to take time to make sense of what's happening. (Kath, parent, 7 years involvement in the school)

In the following vignette, Dianne reflects on the situation of new parents. The vignette allows us to see how there could be a perception of old guard or new guard as well as cliques, simply because of ineffective communication processes. It also allows us to see how there could be a lack of awareness of the existence of different groups.

I want to see new parents be more informed. That doesn't just mean that school starts at 9.05, which is what happens now, but to say that, "this is Freda Jones, she runs the crisis portfolio", "if you need something, don't hesitate to ask", "this is Erica, this is our art teacher, come and see what she's done", rather than just having a sheet of information. Maybe they wouldn't feel so hesitant then, about saying things that need saying. I've watched them at meetings; they just sit there, trying to work it all out. I rang a new parent yesterday; I didn't even know her phone number, to ask her if she was interested in helping in the library. And she didn't even know who I was, she was at the meeting on the Monday night, and I thought, that that shouldn't have happened. And I asked her if she got a list of numbers, and she said "yes", but she can't really put names to faces yet. And I thought, well that's just not good enough, when they come to school, they should come along and be welcomed, and there should be a time for them, may be an evening. If I walked past this woman tomorrow, I wouldn't know for sure if it's her, and she's been at the
school for two terms, and she's got a child in the same class as my boy. That shouldn't happen, we're a small enough group for that not to happen. I think if we can do things like that, we'd be a long way towards where I think we should be. A lot of new parents have wonderful ideas in their heads, but they're not going to tell us if we don't encourage them. (Dianne, 14 years continuous involvement in the school)

Communication processes and skills especially conflict resolution, and the transferring of these knowledges to new parents are absolutely vital in an effective school community, as is the need for structures and procedures to evolve as the needs shift. The problems of ‘change-over’ to new parents and ‘passing on’ the dynamic of community spirit are a central dilemma for participative community schools. The dilemma is that of the reproduction of the ‘culture’ of community. That is, community knowledge is learned collaboratively, in community. The community provides opportunities for individual transformation, which collectively transforms the community. People learn their community skills in community. Yet, school communities comprise members who stay for varying lengths of time due to the number of children they have at the school. Members take quite a long time before they "know what’s going on", in Kath’s words. She said it took her two years. From listening to these stories, it seems to me that it takes significantly more than two years to learn the ‘wisdom’ of effective community process through experience. In my opinion, the next quote from Kath is insightful and is connected with the central dilemma of learning about community, through community.

It's like, give individuals their sense of their own worth, and you will have no problems, but it is a huge task. And then you've got the daily running on top of that, too. You know, it gets pushed aside, it's like in our world, it's like in our relationships, and it’s like in our society, today, that is what gets pushed aside…. We need money, we need to survive. But basically, if you don't have [self-worth] in your life, you're at a dead end. (Kath, parent, 7 years involvement in the school)

She is referring to the dilemma of community members maintaining their self-esteem in the face of learning about community through community, running the school and living their lives. Kath linked her comments on the pushing aside of relationships due to busyness to ‘like in our society, today’. These relationships that get pushed aside, are in fact those of sustainability. This quote illustrates the qualitative difference between the school community and the wider world, as well as Kath’s consciousness of her practical knowledge about functional, sustainable community.
The Paradox of Time: Preparing for the Future, With the Self in the Present

In the context of the dilemma of continuing the dynamic of community spirit across the 'generations' of participants, Taneeka alluded to the notion of the paradox of time. The paradox of time is that of preparing a plan for the future but only ever having the sensorial present to work on it. She warned of the dangers of constructing a model of sustainability education that would be something that groups should aspire to and consequently feel dissatisfied with the present. She emphasised that the present is the important focus and it is important to include everyone wherever they may be on the continuum of community participation skills.

Not that we shouldn't be striving for ideals, and so on. But there are also practicalities, and the dealing with the day-to-day things, the creativity, the actual present is very important. It's not that I don't see the potential, but this is my own learning. I am very idealistic. We can only go as far as a certain point, and then others drop out. To keep that thing that draws us together as a group wherever we are at along the line of our ideals, is very important. Also, being where we are - being happy with that. I see so much discontentment. Doesn't mean we can't be moving towards other things: we do as a group anyway. I suppose my vision is that people can come to feel a part, feel their contribution, feel empowered, and feel valued. I think that's one of the things that the school does have: the children really feel valued, their contribution is valued. The adults feel valued too, but I think it comes from the self. Not: "does everyone appreciate what I'm doing?" We know what has to be done and we enjoy doing it. Some of it is a recognition, being valued, honouring. I know your project is to make a model, but what I would be really concerned with is that it makes people dissatisfied with what they have. That's just my own concern. To have a model of where you'd like to head is great, but the day to day is important. Be there, doing the things that they do is the most important. (Taneeka, parent, 8 years involvement in the school)

It is very important to balance the planning and incorporation of vision, with living and being in the sensorial present. School communities must have both aspects as well as the cumulative community learning and practical knowledge.

Kath refers to the difficulties in finding the common ground in the often-disparate visions of the different parents:

It is a real battle, to actually incorporate [particular] things into [the children's educational program], because teachers don't really want to deal with that, they just want to get down and teach the kids, you know, and I think they find it quite draining that the parents have these visions, ideals, which is something that the school has always struggled with. The people, they do tend to have visions about what they would like to
happen, and about the world, and ideals. They're all idealists, and to make it concrete, and to gather those ideals from every parent, and most of them do have strong ideals, and then find out how to draw out the element from each parent, and find what is common, and then to implement it, is a huge task. It has created huge problems. (Kath, parent, 7 years involvement in the school)

Stephanie put forward compromise as having absolute importance in community relations:

Compromise, isn't that what Forest School means? (Stephanie, parent, over 9 years involvement in the school, which finished 6 years ago)

In the following quote Taneeka illustrates her own knowing-through-experience about the importance of compromise, in learning to be happy with the sensorial present rather than continually striving towards a particular vision:

Part of it, though, is being able to compromise with all the different people, and be happy with what we've got, rather than getting into all of the shoulds - we should do this, we should do that, we should do the other, and on and on and on, and cause discontentment in ourselves and the children, and then some say: "oh, well if we can't have that we'll have nothing", and cause disenchantment and some will take their kids and go elsewhere, to the state school or whatever. And people do that, I see that discontentment. (Taneeka, parent, 8 years involvement in the school)

The issue of group and individual emotionality is connected with the topic of self in the sensorial present. A joint discussion between two parents (Frank and Barry) produced the following statement on the emotional nature of meetings. Both the parents are also members of Gaiaville, an intentional residential community. The interview was being conducted at Gaiaville and the specific example they use to illustrate their point is referring to Gaiaville, but they were referring to Forest School as well.

And that's the big problem here, too. You get people who get all charged up at meetings, somebody says something wrong, or they take it the wrong way and it goes from a molehill to a mountain, someone storms out. Here, when you chair a meeting or whatever, you are emotionally involved. What did Tina say? "You leave your ego at the front door"? or something. I believe what we are trying to do with our meetings is to run those things which are the day to day, the month to month, the year to year or the life to life running of the place, so they should be very structured, they should have constitutions. It should all just fall in to place. But what happens is that meetings get tied up with our emotional involvement with the place, instead of being two-hour meetings that do the business, then sit down later and have something to eat and a chat. I think that's what we have to get through. (Frank, parent and part time teacher, 8 years involvement in the school)
The following vignette from Kath relates her experience about the emotional nature of community involvement. Notions of self and 'self-in-community' are of central importance.

I think what I've learned, perhaps more than anything, are that the personal things that people get, usually aren't that important to the school. It may be important for them, like when they have an issue. I've met a few people who take on issues, and have personally felt attacked, battered, because they have this issue, something is happening for them, who are 'doing it to them'? But the truth of it is, that it's their issue. I'll go back to my learning. I guess I have learned a lot about groups, and nothing is actually that important…. Basically what I've been working on, is that, if I've got a problem, it's my problem, it's not what someone else is doing to me, it's how I'm interpreting it, and how I'm handling it. I think a lot of people haven't actually got to that: they think it's being done to them, but 95% of the time, you are just responding to a situation. And you do have choices in how you respond. (Kath, parent, 7 years involvement in the school, still intensely involved)

Navigation through the various disparate visions and pragmatic community operating considerations is the context of the day-to-day reality for the teachers who are teaching the children, which is the core business of the school. Kath says:

Well the difficulties have always come from the fact that parents are idealists. They choose an alternative school, because they have something in their mind about what they want. When new parents come to the school, the pre-school and the new teachers cop it the most, because they get the parents coming up and saying: "I want this and this and this for my kid, you know, and the teachers go: "OK"...Actually getting the parents to have a little bit of awareness of what the teachers struggle with is something that the school has really needed to address. (Kath, parent, 7 years involvement with the school)

Apart from teaching the children, the teachers' task in a participative community school is one of sensitively balancing curriculum and policy guidelines with the need for flexibility, responsiveness and tact. Teachers need excellent community knowledge and skills. They need to be confident, have a strong sense of self and be assertive about their boundaries. These examples illustrate the explicit propositional-practical knowledge that these community participants have about the significance of constant full engagement of attention to participation and social learning. They are aware that constructing the future happens in the present, that 'transformation of today', creates a transformed future (Inayatullah 2002, 7-21). As well, there is a wide sense of community evident, which I shall call school-as-community.
Community Adjusting to Demographic Changes

The demographic configuration of a school community can change over time with the accompanying necessity to address new problems in divergent and creatively different ways in order to maintain community resilience. In the case of Forest School, one of these changes has been a big increase in the number of single parent families. Dianne says:

I think it was more 'family' then, meaning that there were more 'normal' families then: mother and father. Now there is quite a big single parent element (if that's the right word) in the school. I think that's making it really quite different, and it can be really difficult. A lot of those kids have very little to do with their dads and some of them feel quite unwanted by them, so there is a whole new set of problems. (Dianne, parent, 14 years continuous involvement in the school)

Various single and partnered informants described how this situation affects the community in a variety of ways, including the following. There are fewer parents to participate in community development and the necessary physical community work. The fathers who are present often feel that they need to take on the role of ‘masculinity model’ for the other children with no father present. Single parents often do not attend night meetings since they have no one at home to care for the children. Several of the informants had noted that the children of the single parents often had problems to deal with, due to the feeling of abandonment by their absent parent. The children often needed more attention in the classroom and at community activities because of their behaviours.

Several of the informants described a feeling of responsibility for the single parents themselves, who seemed to be more vulnerable and in need of more community support. Dianne described that sometimes she feels annoyed with single parents:

I do tend to feel a bit cross and feel a bit standoffish about some things. Like the last busy bee was organised by a single mother and she organised it on father's day, because she wouldn't have her kids. They would be with their dad for father's day. But some of us would like to stay home on father's day, actually. But it's the little things like that that they don't think about. They also think, "I shouldn't have to do that because I'm a single parent". Or, "I can't make it to my roster day, because I am a single parent and I am trying to earn a living". And it's just like, well, excuse me, but we're all in this [school]. … In lots of ways it goes back to what we were saying at the beginning about the importance of community, and the way that the community can support each other. I suppose that's one way that all the kids can have role
models, because if they are going to be playing at each others' places, then they are going to have experience with those kids' parents as well. We had a little boy staying here last year, and his dad was away. He hadn't seen him for a long time. The little boy just followed John (partner) like a sheep, with a cricket bat in one hand and a ball in the other. "Come on, let's do this, let's do that", to the point where Jack (son) went: "wish he'd go home, he's not playing with me, all he wants to do is play with my Dad all the time". (Dianne, parent, 14 years continuous involvement in the school)

I interviewed one single parent (who had been at the school only one year) who affirmed all of the above and described the frustration she felt in not being able to attend the meetings. She also felt anger at what she perceived as ‘heavying’ to attend meetings, which she could not attend because of her baby. This dilemma with the issues created by perceptions about single parents and the stated felt difficulties of single parents would have to be addressed by Forest School in an explicit way in order to maintain a functional community dynamic.

Another one of the subtle changes in the demographic configuration of Forest School is the paradigmatic orientation of the participants. Dianne answers a question about the degree of change since the early days of the school. Her response needs no interpretation.

At that stage, there were a lot of alternative people here. Most of them have left now.

*Really? (interviewer)*

Yes. Apart from .... there are few left.

*Where are they all? Have they left or gone "mainstream", so to speak? (interviewer)*

Both. Some of them have gone mainstream, some of them have become real estate agents and so on (money got in the way), and some of them have gone to places like Moyranup (300kms away) and places like that. I think they saw what was happening in this area and a lot of them got tired of fighting all the time. (Dianne, parent, 14 years continuous involvement in the school)

The point of this section has been to illustrate that as the demography of the community changes over time, alterations in the community's structures, procedures and processes are needed as well as in individuals' personal practices so that the community can maintain its balance. In order for a community to be fully participative and actually
egalitarian and for the benefits (and responsibilities) to be felt and accepted by all
participants, all participants need to listen and really hear the experiences and needs of
others. Through the effort to meet everyone's needs, the community will be able to
adapt to the changing situations in such a way as to conform to the values and principles
that have been mutually accepted. This maintains congruence between the community's
philosophical orientation and its practices. In this way reproduction of the community
spirit, the heart of the school, can occur.

Two Children's Experiences

To conclude the discussion about community I shall include two quotes that describe
the experiences of students at the school. The first description is from Joanie (seventeen
years old at the time of interview) and Jeremy (fifteen years old at the time of
interview). Forest School is a primary school, therefore these two children left the
school at the end of the year during which they turned twelve years old. I have included
these reports because, while they are not necessary for the purpose of the research, they
give the reader some insight into the children's experience of the school. Their reports
are very different from each other's, reflecting the range of childhood experience of the
school. I have included sections of the interview with Joanie because she articulates her
sense of being different from her non-Forest School friends, which she directly
attributes to Forest School. She also gives her opinion of the school and its outcomes
with regards to her Forest School peers. As a teacher I was extremely impressed with
her ability to articulate and critique her experiences, feelings and ambitions and
particularly impressed by her personal confidence.

To facilitate reading I have broken the data into sub-headings. I do not wish to interpret
however, so I have left Joanie to 'speak for herself'.

Joanie's Story 17 years old, past Forest School student for the whole of
primary school).

Organisation of Learning

I have really fun, joyous memories of it [Forest School]. I just remember
being a kid, running round and just enjoying life. The school was planned
in an interesting way so, like, you didn't have to go to maths now, you
didn't have to go to science, whatever. We were always doing other
activities that were related into it, that were hands on and that sort of
thing.
Social Skills
For sure, I think that Forest School had a very large impact in the way I react to situations and relate to other people. A lot of my friends [referring to people who did not go to Forest School] can't make decisions, and they get stressed about making the wrong decision. They get too concerned with the consequences, you know; "if I've made the wrong decision, then I'll have to...." You know, they only see consequences, they don't see life after the consequences if it doesn't work out. … I think I learned that [self confidence and decisiveness] at Forest School, I don't regret that at all, I love having that trait, being able to be honest with people. …

Teachers
I felt personally cared for. I loved all of my teachers that I had at Forest School. I had a very good relationship with them, and I still do. … I've noticed that a lot of people who have been to Forest School do have: they can approach people and say, "I don't understand where I stand".

My Personality
I am a pretty outgoing sort of person, I like the outdoors and the environment. I do care a lot for the environment, I think going to Forest School, and my parents' views have helped a lot there. I probably would call myself a greenie, in the form that I see a greenie as someone that cares for the environment, and is aware of the issues, whereas some people see greenies as biased: the forest is there to be saved, etc. I always try to see both sides of the issue. I say, "look: have you considered this aspect", although I am biased towards the environmental side, I suppose. I try not to be too much, just the middle of the road.

The School
[Forest School] is just great at bringing out people's abilities, like some people are better at science, like Jeremy is. I'm better at art and social skills. That showed out: I used to be chairperson of the school meetings, that sort of thing, and it used to be like, "Joanie will do that", and it wasn't like, "oh, no, I don't want to do that", it was "oh, yeah, that would be fun", you know, I know I'm good at that. And still now, I can say that I am a good chairperson, or mediator, or that, when my friends are having their troubles. (Joanie, 17 years old at time of interview, past Forest School student for the whole of primary school).

I have included sections of the interview with Jeremy because they contrast with Joanie's in their ambiguity of responses and lack of overt support for the school.

Conversation with Jeremy - past Forest School student for the whole of primary school, fifteen years old at time of interview
What are your memories of your school days? (interviewer)
Got away with a lot.
That's an interesting first statement! (interviewer)
I mucked around lots, wasted lots of time, "I didn't hear the bell"... 

So would you have called your primary school years happy? (interviewer) 

Mixed. Mixed? (interviewer) There were good points, bad points, and all points. 

What were the best points? (interviewer) 

Dunno. The camps were good. Like every year we'd go, away. 

What were your best subjects? (interviewer) 

It wasn't divided into subjects. We just stuffed around and did some science, maths, spelling, and a fair bit of social studies. I used to hate sport. 

When you went to high school, did you feel that you were properly prepared? (interviewer) 

In certain circumstances, yes. But I reckon ... [inaudible]. When I was at Forest School, there was only one other person in my grade. (Jeremy, past Forest School student for the whole of primary school, fifteen years old at time of interview.) 

The majority of the stories told by the adults pointed to experiences that were closer to Joanie's experience than Jeremy’s. 

The following quote from Kath may explain some of Jeremy's ambiguity about the school: 

One of the dilemmas that kids have at Forest School, is that there are so few that if you don't fit in, you are out. And I have seen people take their kids out for that reason. 

Just not enough kids? (interviewer) 

Yeah, just didn't fit in with the group that was there, and there wasn't enough choice. I think that's a valid reason for dragging your kid out, if they really struggle with that for a couple of years. (Kath, 7 years at the school) 

There are both advantages and disadvantages of the small size of Forest School. The small size is useful for community management and bureaucratic efficiency and good for children and parents to be able to know and relate to each other, but sometimes disadvantageous with regard to children's socialisation. Kath said this about her son's Forest School experience: 

His wasn't nearly as positive as Chloe's, because -- and I'm going to say something really sexist here -- because he's a boy (laugh). I've always been really strong about not role stereotyping, but I actually really think that boys learn differently to girls... So he's been bored, he's bored at school already. (Kath, parent, 7 years at the school)
I did not inquire into the difference in quality of school experience due to gender. The school may wish to inquire into this question. Further, I did not collect statistics to investigate the numbers of similar aged friends available to the various children, to consider whether this factor may have impacted upon their capacity to develop socially. Overall I would say that the community was successful in achieving the aim of allowing their children to be happy at school. The following quotation from a discussion with James reflects the sentiments of most of the people I spoke to:

So the original visions that you had, actually came to pass? (Interviewer)
I'd say 95%.

Your kids were happy as well? (Interviewer)
They couldn't get to school fast enough. The kids were absolutely happy. There might be some generalities here, but I'd say that the only people who were ever unhappy at the school were the parents! The kids were never unhappy. ...well, we used to say: "if they have a problem at Forest School, we'd love 'em along"! And that's what we did, we loved them along, we gave them quite a family, and...that's what we did, we loved them along. And it worked. So for me, it was a great revelation. No, it wasn't a revelation. It was something I believed in, and it works. ...Forest School has a heart, you know? It has a heart. You'd be down there, and it might be chaotic, people might be running around, but there is a heart there, the kids are happy to be there and they want to be there… (James, parent and part time teacher, 9 years intensive involvement in the school, which finished 6 years ago. He still maintains some involvement.)

This subsection points to an assumption that most or nearly all of the children were happy with their schooling most or nearly all of the time. The children had an experience of growing up in a community culture of active citizenship, outward care and loving contribution. In my opinion this experience, even if occasionally fraught or mixed, is a precious and priceless gift to a child.

6.3 Communitarianism as Compassionate Action

In this section I shall draw together what I have learned from the community at Forest School and relate it back to the main question for this research, which is: How can school people create a more sustainable future? James and Stephanie would answer it this way:

Save the world? The answer's obvious. Save yourself first. If you went back to the original hard core of Forest School when we all got
together... There was brotherhood, there was love, and they wanted to spread the goodness that was around. I think we all learned that the ideal, working for uniting nations is a great cause, but...it's like trying to get a splinter out of someone's eye, when you have a log in yours. And so until you have your own act together, if you can't save your own community, how can you possibly save the planet? (James)

I think it starts with your own self, and it spreads. (Stephanie)

Davison (2001) would answer the research question, by saying: craft a culturally sustaining life for yourself and your community. To summarise the advice of the elders of Forest School about how we might go about crafting a sustaining life, this section develops a propositional account of a democratic dynamic through the communitarian practices of Sarah's circle. A school-as-community can functionally transform the model of experience that constitutes society by transforming itself: that is for me the message from Forest School. The journey towards Sarah's circle in Forest School’s orientation towards community and its struggle for genuine participative democracy, is an instructive way to order what this school has experienced through the years.

I shall consider differences between Forest School and Caffery’s (1987) research schools. A key difference is that the community of Forest School was intentional from the beginning: as a school-as-community. Although most Forest School parents also saw themselves as part of the bigger, looser alternative lifestyle community in Beachtown, particularly at the beginning, there was an overt intention to establish the school as a community. The early days and beyond featured ‘whole community’ meetings - all major decisions were made at whole community meetings. At the time of the research that was still the case (although by the time of the research the structure was considerably less cumbersome). I consider the factor of intention to be very important to the quality of community.

The second major difference, that I consider vital to the Forest School community's sustainability, was the major upheaval that happened between the school's seventh and eighth years. This was caused by the incursion into the school of a new, dynamic and again, unique group of individuals who brought a new, vital sense of organisation and community process to the school, while the previous group were still vital and involved. The commitment and infusion of new skills resulted in the structures, procedures and
processes to address the decisions to be made and tasks to be implemented in a more pragmatic, functional application of participatory democracy.

Thirdly, factors that characterised some of the schools in Caffery’s research such as a return to individualistic and private economic goals, reduction in involvement, destructive conflict, teacher scapegoating, workload imbalance\textsuperscript{76} and dysfunction were certainly present in the history of the Forest School, but they did not characterise the community. The community did not develop the sense of apathy or complacency that schools in Caffery's research had experienced. Forest School had certainly had conflict, but not lack of commitment. In my opinion, this is because the Forest School community had intentionally developed themselves as a community of learners, which underpinned its culture. Caffery had observed this in a small way in one school, but for the Forest School research it was an inescapable over-riding, easily discussable attribute. Everyone talked about the necessity to learn to be part of community. They saw their involvement in the school community as an on-going process of learning. This was an implicit and explicit understanding, possessed by every school member that I spoke to. I was extremely impressed by it. It was a product of Forest School's history - the group of characters who had intentionally, lovingly and sometimes exasperatingly, crafted the community over the years, giving the community and themselves wisdom along the way. Forest School parents were wise about the community joys as well as the pitfalls. Very importantly, the school community was characterised by unconditional personal responsibility.

\textbf{6.3.1 Community as Learning Collective}

As a result of this study at Forest School, I have a new understanding of the community dynamic and of the importance of unconditional personal responsibility and compassion together with a conscious intention to develop a school community with a 'heart' or spirit. With consideration to the individual and the community as a whole, there is a real need to see oneself as a constant learner - one should never become complacent about this. The development of a community school is a huge undertaking. The community can be a context of a spirit of learning, work and love with deep meaning for the children who learn there. It has boundless potential to provide an atmosphere ripe for

\textsuperscript{76} The unbalanced work-load includes over-work and burn-out as well as under-commitment.
children to learn social skills in a real life community context of adults and children. Because of the various skills and experiences the adults in the community have, the children have a greater access to human learning resources than they would have simply in a classroom or playground with one or two adults. However community, with its stateliness and spirited calm and beauty, can suddenly career into an abyss of chaos and pain, and maybe loll there unhappily before retreating into pseudo-community, a state of politeness and normality but devoid of 'spirit'. Only real communication and effective conflict resolution together with compromise and a spirit of compassion can restore the sense of connected, genuine community after a spiralling down. The Forest School research shows that the development of communication skills in individuals as well as communication structures, procedures and processes in the community are vital to community well-being and healthy continuity.

This research shows that a school underpinned by radical democracy as this one is, must have effective decision-making procedures and structures for all to participate in to the degree to which they wish to contribute. This is with the proviso that they participate to the minimum level of participation that every family agrees to abide by. Communication structures, procedures and processes are essential for democratic discussion and decision-making. The effectiveness and task outcomes of these structures and processes need to be continuously monitored and critiqued by the community to ensure that they are genuinely egalitarian. That is, to ensure that they do not privilege certain people on the basis of the length of time they have been in the community or status as a single or partnered parent or any other variable. On the other hand, it is important to see that good community learning and wisdom gained by years of reflective experience, are incorporated into the decision-making operation.

The community of Forest School is underpinned by a collective and personal commitment to learning about community. Because of its nature as a school, a school community is continuously evolving with some parents leaving while others begin. I suggest that the central dilemma for a school community is its cultural reproduction. In other words how will the community ensure that everyone has access to learning about sustaining community? This means the personal qualities that people need to develop as well as the community structures, procedures and processes. In addition it would help newcomers to have the opportunity to formally learn about the dynamics of community,
the stages of community and the nature of the regular rise and fall, the pulse, so that their learning is more than informal. It would be sensible for individuals to have a sense of the pitfalls that can occur in order to anticipate them and help to avoid them or at least to reduce the depth of personal and collective distress. A regular ‘education for community wisdom’ discussion meeting would be helpful. Alternatively, this may take the form of one agenda item on the community council meeting. The agenda for this discussion would include the community skills individuals need to develop as well as reflection on the effectiveness of decision-making structures, procedures and processes.

6.3.2 School Community as Significant Site for Social Transformation

The Forest School research shows that a school community can effectively function as a communitarian organisation underpinned by radical democracy. The research briefly traced the unfolding of an effective participative public domain from its origin as an anti-establishment, non-formal participative group, to a quite sophisticated small participative democracy. The arena of the school community is indeed a significant site for social transformation, both of the community as a collective and of the individuals who comprise the community. With regard to the community as a collective, it should always be striving to evolve further towards a community orientation. By this, I mean continuously reflecting on and improving its processes and structures to be more egalitarian and supportive of its community, teachers and children. With regard to the community as individuals, most of the individuals reported that they had transformed themselves in some way through their intentional learning. They had become more tolerant, compromising and compassionate of each other. Each developed authenticity as giving, compassionate beings. Many took the skills they had learned in this community to become politically active in the broader community. For example at different times at least five past Forest School parents had gained seats on the Beachtown Shire Council. One of these people told me that he learned all of those skills through eight years of participation in the school. Prior to coming to the school he had been shy and quietly spoken. (The other four were not asked the question.)

Bowles' and Gintis' (1986) notion of radical democracy as emphasis on community as learners certainly holds in this research, although it is important to see that there are considerable choices to be made in a radical democracy. Some people opt out of
involvement simply by taking an attitude of low participation. Should they find themselves in a downwardly spiralling community, they may choose to leave rather than be part of the learning and creativity, which result from the necessary communication and conflict resolution which should follow. A participant may be unable to participate fully in the community, perhaps because of work commitments or prior decisions. This sometimes happens in a family with two adult partners where one of the adults works long hours and leaves the other partner to participate in the school community. I tentatively say that community spirit is heightened to the degree to which there are individuals who accept unconditional personal responsibility for the community. This responsibility includes being personally responsible for balancing one's own contribution rather than taking on what the individual or others consider to be an unreasonable amount.

Linking the outcomes of this project with the literature, the communitarian notion of 'persons-in-community' is descriptive. Virtue ethics is a sound base - the notions of unconditional personal responsibility, compromise and compassion are vital virtues. 'Responsibility' as a characteristic is significant. Using Bonhoeffer’s work, Stanfield inquired into the nature of responsibility, which revealed that within the concept of responsibility, freedom and obligation exist in tension with each other. The closer obligation and freedom are to each other, the more authentic will be the responsibility. This means that as humans we are obligated and we are free. The freedom determines the bounds of our morality in fully creating our lives as we want them to be through choice and commitment. Stanfield's essential point is:

The alternatives are not between whether we are going to be free or obligated. The challenge in every decision we make is to be one hundred percent obligated and one hundred percent free at the same time. (2000, 179)

Using this logic, with freedom but not obligation one floats to whatever one wishes to, free of context and without a vision of what is necessary.

I believe the concept of responsibility as freedom and obligation is what James (research informant, parent) meant when he said that they were hippies (that is, free) but more conservative (that is, accepting of obligation). The school began with this sense of responsibility. However I have extended the notion and called it 'unconditional personal responsibility', because in this research the notion is deeper. 'Unconditional' indicates
that the responsibility is without condition, which means without the expectation of reward of any description. It is a personal undertaking before it is a collective one. Even when collective responsibility exists, such as when a group undertakes to perform a task, each person must have an unconditional responsibility for task completion. I use works by Bonhoeffer and Buber to enrich this concept. I read Bonhoeffer's work as following from the acknowledgment of profound interconnectedness with nature, with God and with each other. Bonhoeffer states:

Only when it has become selfless in this obligation does a life stand in the freedom of a man's truly own life and action... (1964, 224).

He says that responsibility is "essentially a relation of man to man" [sic] (1964, 226). He suggests that only the selfless person can be completely responsible and only through this responsibility does the selfless person live (1964, 225, emphasis given). His emphasis on live points to the fullness of his message. He describes the devotion to truth, goodness, justice and beauty for their own sake rather than for a moral purpose (1964, 226). So far this description still seems dispassionate and academic. Bonhoeffer was a Christian ethicist and his work refers to qualities in the explanation of a Christian good life. His description is based in a spiritual understanding of responsibility. However this research is secular and non Christians may miss the essence.

Bonhoeffer (1964, 49) uses the term ‘love’ in a transitive sense and in a Christian context. I believe this quality is the quintessence of responsibility that needs recognition. As part of a description of love, he says:

... all those definitions which endeavour to represent the essence of love as a human attitude, as conviction, devotion, sacrifice, and the will to fellowship, feeling, brotherhood, service or action. All these, without exception, can, as we have just heard, arise without ‘love’. Everything that we are accustomed to call love, that which lives in the depths of the soul and in the visible deed, and even the brotherly service of one’s neighbour which proceeds from a pious heart, all this can be without ‘love’, not because there is always a ‘residue’ of selfishness in all human conduct, entirely overshadowing love, but because love as a whole is something entirely different from what the word designates here.... Love is the reconciliation of man with God in Jesus Christ. The disunion of men with God, with other men, with the world and with themselves, is at an end. Man’s origin is given back to him. Love, therefore, is not man’s choice, but it is the election of man by God. (Bonhoeffer, 1964, 49 – 54).

This passage expresses the dimension that is missing from the description of responsibility given above. It is the impulse that gives union or deep connection
‘outwards’ – with other people, with nature and for the good of all. However its theistic context limits the definition, which I do not wish to do. The meaning that I am searching for is something that is experienced by people irrespective of their faith. Buber's use of the 'thou' is close to the impulse to which I refer:

The extended lines of relations meet in the eternal Thou. Every particular Thou is a glimpse through to the eternal Thou; by means of every particular Thou, the primary word addresses the eternal Thou. Through this mediation of the Thou of all beings, fulfilment and non-fulfilment of relations comes to them: the inborn Thou is realized in each relation and consummated in none. It is consummated only in the direct relation with the Thou that by its nature cannot become It. (Buber, 1960, 55, italics given)

Buber beautifully describes a thrust, or an inclination of outward expression, which is a relation to divinity.

The sense of responsibility to which I refer is that which the parents have for their own children, for others' children, for their children's friends and in the knowledge that it is for the good of the children, the parents, the teachers, the community and the planet. As part of his treatise Buber also says:

Between you and it there is mutual giving: you say Thou to it and give yourself to it, it says Thou to you and gives itself to you. ... Through the graciousness of its comings, and the solemn sadness of its goings, it leads you away to the Thou in which the parallel lines of relations meet. It does not help to sustain you in life; it only helps you to glimpse eternity. (Buber, 1960, 54, italics given)

This definition still has a spiritual context. However in my opinion Buber wishes the thrust to be general so that the goal is met if a person sees oneself as atheist, but recognises the reverence in being (1960, 55). The collective synergy from people working together with unconditional personal responsibility is the 'palpable' spirit of community. I shall take the production of the spirit of community further in the next chapter.

When the community spirals into a stage of chaos (using Peck's stages) it can feel like the community spirit has declined. Stanfield (2000, 127) mentions the aloneness that individuals feel when life's meaning seems to evaporate - when accomplishments seem trivial and efforts can feel futile. In this state, motivation disappears and passion collapses. He equates this feeling with the personal crisis referred to as the "dark night of the soul". Individuals may be feeling humiliated, weak and resentful. Stanfield
comments that during this crisis individuals may retreat or they can persist with it until the state of calm.

In the context of community, individual retreat means exit of the family from the community. However as St. John of the Cross writes, persisting through the meaningless can bring clarity and existential transformation and the depth of the "warfare and combat" (of the dark night) are matched by the depth of the peace (1973, 115). What I am noticing is that the community chaos can lead to a deep sense of loss in individuals, which may bring grief and necessitate grieving. Further, there seems to be a correlation between Peck's stages in community and each individual's sense of meaning. That is, individuals who are deeply connected to a community can feel deeply separated and alone during community crises. These crises in school communities can affect the children. As Jeremy (fourteen year old research informant) commented, "There was lots of huffing and puffing with the other teachers and parents", meaning that the adults argued for quite some time. Children are well aware of community conflict and can feel a sense of anxiety. It is healthy for children to be part of a caring community and it is healthy for them to understand that conflict is a useful phenomenon that needs to be resolved appropriately in order to lead to creative solutions. However it is not healthy for children to feel anxiety about their school because adults cannot satisfactorily address their problems.

I support Korten's (1990) notion of development as transformation to a just, sustainable and inclusive world in which the personal is the political. I shall quote a passage from Bowles and Gintis in order to further consider what I saw as the central dilemma of a school community, which is that of cultural reproduction or transformation. Bowles and Gintis use what they call a visionary-historical model as opposed to a Utopian model. The Utopian model, which seems to be the initial history of this school, ignores questions of social reproduction and history. This explains the huge difficulty with the changing of the guard after seven years of operation.

The visionary-historic model (quoted below) addresses the deficit so it is an improvement, but it still does not seem to address the issue of turnover of members such as that in a school.

The problem of building a democratic society is thus one of a dynamic interaction of rules and actors, with the actors rendering the rules more
democratic, and the increasingly democratic rules rendering the actors more firmly committed to and skilled at democratic participation and decision-making. We term this process a democratic dynamic... A conception of post-liberal democracy that is at once visionary and historical, then, is one that describes a democratic dynamic leading to a reproducible democratic institutional equilibrium. (Bowles and Gintis, 1986, 186)

Bowles and Gintis (1986, 187) draw attention to the fact that rules and culture must be mutually reproducing. They say that rules and culture are concurrently determined, being at once the cause and the effect of the other. Only some combinations of democratic culture and institutional arrangements are historically stable, since actors make rules and rules make actors. For example a highly democratic culture will not exist for long with undemocratic rules, thus an anti-democratic dynamic may produce a downward spiral, having the consequence of eroding the democracy. There are obviously no simple solutions to these quandaries in community, other than the personal qualities of conscious, aware, intention; commitment to constant learning; and commitment to unconditional personal responsibility to enable compassionate action, as well as the organisational qualities of democratic, egalitarian structures, procedures and processes.

Chapter Summary

In this chapter I investigated the notion of social transformation from individualism towards the communitarianism of radical ecology. I critiqued individualism because of its association with consumerism, and social and ecological degradation. Forest School community was investigated with an ethnographic research method to determine if a school community can function effectively as a radical democratic polity over the longer term and to see if it could be socially transformative. The original pioneers of the school had Utopian dreams in the construction of the school, although people joined the school for a variety of reasons. These reasons include wanting to be part of the anti-establishment 'back to the earth' movement; wanting a holistic, creative education for their children; wanting a smaller school for their children to enhance their self-esteem, so that they do not get 'lost'; or wanting a welcoming community for themselves and their children. The school developed as a caring, supportive community.
The community had, at various times in its past, suffered downward spirals into chaos and pseudo-community, which needed to be resolved through effective conflict resolution and communication. Burn out is a common cause of this. A tumultuous phase now known as the 'changing of the guard’, reflected a lack of forward planning and communication to include new community members in the decision-making structure of the community. The learning to be gained from the story of the changing of the guard is that every community member, regardless of the amount of experience they have in community, needs to be constantly aware of their receptivity and listening, to ensure that they are not excluding any community members.

Interviewees stressed the importance of a focus on the present while planning for the future. A vision needs to be realistic and present-focused, and should not be shrouded in 'shoulds' that might cause discontentment in the present. It is in the sensorial present that the community exists and the children are being educated. Likewise emotionality exists in the sensorial present of the self. 'Perfect community visions' often do not take account of tiredness arising from late night meetings or emotional engagement with particular outcomes. Discussions about the context of people's children are highly subjective and emotive. Good communication and effective conflict resolution together with mutual support are important aspects of community.

I found that Forest School functioned as a radical democracy over the longer term, developing an effective sense of school-as-community. I also found that it was socially transformative, both in the sense of continuously transforming its own culture towards improved decision-making processes and in the sense of transforming and empowering individual lives. Further, I found that it was like this because community members had made a personal commitment to the school and the learning process. The research documented a culture of learning, where all but one person interviewed talked of their learning and commitment to learning in community. They had developed an unconditional personal responsibility for the spirit of the community and were tolerant, compromising and compassionate.

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77 I interviewed the 'elders', those who had committed themselves and stayed for the long term.
78 The person who did not, was a single parent who had been at the school for approximately one year, and who felt unsupported by the community. She felt that she was “heavied” to attend meetings, even though she had a new baby and found it very difficult to go to evening meetings.
School-as-community is significant for EfS. Applying the political pillar in community decision-making, and in the notion of community culture-learning through participation, is a practical and complex task. Within the political pillar, orientation towards stronger, deeper democracy means on-going intentional relational learning. The ‘learning for democracy’ element requires explicit, regular personal and collective attention to procedures, processes, structures and interpersonal relationships, as well as particular habits of action, mind and spirit. These habits include acceptance of unconditional personal responsibility for the children and balanced involvement in the task of transforming self and school community for the ‘future’, the practice of principles such as compassion, honesty, openness, self worth, participation and mutual support, as well as intentional ongoing learning of skills for participatory decision-making such as facilitation, real listening and reflective dialogical participation, responsiveness and conflict resolution strategies. The crafting of a culturally sustaining life through participative democracy is fundamental scaffolding for sustainability.
Various writers (for example, Noddings, 1992; Eisler, 2000; and Fox 1990, 2000) say that a culture characterised by a spirit of cooperation is required to address the planetary crises. The Forest School study (chapter six) shows that this culture is possible in a school community. In this chapter I consider the intentional development of a democratic dynamic and community spirit. In section one I critique hierarchy in relationships because of its association with domination, which is antithetical to democratic processes (Stirling, 2001, 38). In section two I report on a cooperative inquiry research project at a school I call Riverdale School and I present the conclusions in section three.

For most teachers and parents who wish to develop this community quality, the question is - where do we start? How do we start? Some writers such as Stanfield (2000) suggest starting with the self. I investigated a cooperative inquiry group as a starting place, because it is a holistic approach to transformation of the group and of the self, and because I wished to further consider the political pillar of EfS. The research comprised the development of a proposal for participative decision-making structures at Riverdale School. Cooperative inquiry offers a forum for intentional practical learning about transforming relationships.

Organisational redesign from hierarchical organisations through institutional organisations to collaborative organisations and finally collaborative learning organisations has been well expounded in recent literature. In this chapter I shall use and adapt M. Fox’s (1990) metaphors of Jacob's ladder and Sarah's circle to clarify the characteristics to which we refer when discussing transformation. Jacob's ladder represents the hierarchical quest for perfection and success, which is gained at the cost of compassion, nurturing, caring and earthiness. Ladder climbing is dangerous especially at the upper levels where top-heavy ladders are unstable and there is further to fall.

The antithesis to Jacob's ladder is Sarah's circle, which is grounded and circular,
therefore people are interconnected and easily able to relate interpersonal truths. Metaphorically there is dancing rather than climbing, creativity and revitalisation rather than upward linear movement and eye contact and cooperation rather than looking down on and increasing distance apart. Hunter et al. (1997, 7) use the term: co-operacy, which they distinguish from democracy and refer to as “the technology of collective or consensus decision making...”. If all of the qualities of Sarah's circle are taken together, the image of a dancing circle is practised by collaboration, communication and interpersonal care. In contrast, the image of a ladder suggests privilege, positional power and individualism, resulting in unjust consequences for society and the ecosphere, many of which are associated with the lack of eye contact with others.

7.1 The Problem of Hierarchical Relationships

Many interpersonal actions, practices and expressions are motivated by the unquestioned assumption of hierarchy. Competition is embedded in and explicated through the epistemology of hierarchy and implicitly assumes win/lose, adversary, self-interest, under/over, success/failure, strongest/weakest and survival/death. A strong sense of competition fuels the drive up (Jacob's) ladder but for competition to be enacted, tacit or explicit agreement about the existence of the ladder is a prerequisite. I do not say that we should totally eschew competition; rather, competition can be intentionally deployed as a means to an end whilst embedded within a cooperative framework. I will illustrate this in the Riverdale School cooperative inquiry analysis.

In this dissertation I take a broad view of hierarchy, in the sense of the cognitive framework of hierarchy patterning the way of thinking which pervades the business-as-usual paradigm with the full support of our language and cultural institutions. A hierarchy is: "any system of persons or things in a graded order" (Delbridge et al., 1982). The word originates from the Greek, hierarches, "steward of sacred rites" (Delbridge et al., 1982). The hierarch is the ruler and those presided over descend in successive ranks. This logic underpins the history of the global north - master/slaves, king/subjects, master/servants, lord/peasants, bourgeois/proletariat, adults/children, and

75 For example, Senge (1990, 2000). A chart by Edges (1997) is attached as Appendix Five, to illustrate and summarise change from hierarchical to learning organisations.

80 Hunter et al. (1997, 10) see democracy as parliamentary democracy and majority rule.
so on. Lately, we have become aware of implicit rather than explicit hierarchical relationships such as people/nature, economy/government, corporations/people and rich/poor, which are underpinned by possessive or positional power. It has long been believed by the 'over' and often by the 'under' members of the hierarchy, that these relationships were for the good of those being ruled. There are other benign uses of the term, such as that meaning successive 'platforms' built upon a foundation, for example Heron's up-hierarchy of knowledge grounded in experience (1996, 33 - 34) as well as actualisation hierarchies (Eisler, 1987, 106). Generally I would like to problematise our use of the concept of hierarchy, particularly in contexts that are uncritical and often subconscious.

7.1.1 Hierarchy as 'Natural''

Writing in 1887, Tonnies described three kinds of authority as aspects of the power of the father in accordance with the will of the father, which I take to refer to each of the kinds of hierarchical relationships. These are: "authority of age, authority of force, and authority of wisdom or spirit." He says:

The danger inherent in such power causes fear in the weaker ones, and this by itself would mean nothing but negation and repudiation (except in so far as mingled with admiration). Beneficence and good will, however, bring forth the will to honor; and the sentiment of reverence is born in a situation where will to honor predominates. Thus, as a result of this difference in power, tenderness corresponds to reverence or, in lesser degree of intensity, benevolence to respect; they represent the two poles of sentiment on which Gemeinschaft is based, in case there exists a definite difference of power. The existence of such motives makes possible and probable a kind of Gemeinschaft even between master and servant… (1957, 42).

The relationship was seen to be reciprocal and natural. In terms of freedom in a Gesellschaft society, Tonnies wrote that the capitalist class were completely free, the labouring class were semi-free but formally capable of deliberate action whereas slaves comprised, "tool and material" (1957, 100). With regard to power, Tonnies wrote:

All [men] are alike in one respect: they want the means or the power which guarantees them, through their very use, as much of the pleasures as they desire (1957, 127).

I presume he meant men (sic) with the freedom to strive for power. Tonnies believed that the striving for power was for three reasons: "self-interest", "greed for money" and "the control of available human wills" (1957, 127). Since Plato and the Greek slaves,
the global north has been underpinned by hegemonic power-over relationships as a
naturalised, ordinary part of the lifeworld - an ideology of domination and oppression
(Plumwood, 1993, 73). In this vein, in the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries theories
underpinned by Social Darwinism81 justified uncontrolled exploitation and enslavement
for the purpose of colonisation and the development of free enterprise without state
interference (Singer, 1995, 84 - 85). The same logic to a greater or lesser extent
underpins all hierarchical relationships.

**Domination and Actualisation Hierarchies**

Eisler (1987, 106) describes two types of hierarchies. Domination hierarchies are those
patriarchal hierarchies which rule by force or the threat of force. Actualisation
hierarchies progress from less complex to more complex levels of function such as
those from molecules, to cells to organs in individual organisms, resulting in the
organism reaching its own full potential. Eisler (ibid,) makes the important point that
domination hierarchies typically restrain the actualisation of higher functions in systems
and in individual humans. Sennett (1980, 189) sees domination as a goal in itself, or
power without restraint. He would agree with Tonnies (1957, 127) who saw the striving
for power as being for reasons of egoism, money greediness and control over people.
He sees domination as the string of command in a configuration of power which
intrinsically does harm to the requirements and wishes of some according to the dictates
of others.

Sennett (1980, 190) says that the subordinates could see themselves as more than
unfortunate victims through a revisioning of authority as process: as making, breaking
and remaking of meanings. He comments that the gift of the authority is care for others
but he will allocate it only when the bestowal serves his interests (1980, 86). At the
other end of the care continuum is the form of authority which makes no pretence to
authority, leading to the image of an autonomous person. However this authority can
command a respect which is intimidatory over others. This is a paternalistic kind of
authority in which the acts of indifference can maintain dominance (Sennett, 1980, 86).

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81 Social Darwinism was a theory which was modelled on biological evolution theory, and held that the foundation for social
progress was the survival struggle.
Eisler proposes a partnership model underpinned by what she names as a gylanic\textsuperscript{82} approach, as an alternative to the dominator model. The partnership model is a model underpinned by linking rather than ranking. This means that diversity is simply that, diversity – it has no implied meaning of inferiority or superiority (Eisler, 1987, xvii, 192, 193). A partnership model of relationship emphasises ‘with’ and ‘win-win’ methods of conflict resolution rather than the explosive, power-over, win/lose dominator approach (Hunter \textit{et al.}, 1997). The dominator approach is consistent with Fox’s Jacob’s ladder metaphor while the gylanic, partnership model is consistent with Sarah’s circle.

\textbf{7.1.2 Collusion with Hierarchy Through Competitiveness as the Status Quo}

We often use dominative or competitive practices simply because it is the status quo - cultural, social and personal habit (Gastil, 1993, 144). Hierarchy is exemplified in simplistic win/lose, up/down arguments that characterise our thinking and praxis. In the business-as-usual lifeworld, thinking is internally colonised by competition. This view is supported by Habermas whose thesis of internal colonisation states:

The subsystems of the economy and state become more and more complex as a consequence of capitalist growth, and penetrate ever deeper into the symbolic reproduction of the lifeworld. (1987, 366)

In order to comprehend hierarchy as the status quo some understanding of the internalisation of the subsystems of economy is useful. I will use Bauman's (1988 and 2001) work to illustrate the pervasiveness of competitiveness in the daily lives of business-as-usual consumers. Bauman's (1988, 11) post-modern understanding of power builds on the Foucauldian concept of ribbons of disciplinary power everywhere, which uses surveillance as its primary technique. Bauman suggests that Foucault's panopticon metaphor omitted the insight of freedom versus unfreedom, or autonomous versus regulated action and the social relation\textsuperscript{83} of power between them. With this understanding freedom can be seen as the ability to rule, a "bid for power" (Bauman, 1988, 23).

\textsuperscript{82} Eisler (1988, 105) proposes the use of the term 'gylany', comprising the base of the Greek root words for woman and man (gyne and andros). These are linked by 'l' for the linking of both halves of humanity, and the Greek ‘lyein’ or ‘lyo’ meaning to dissolve or set free (as in analysis). Therefore, the letter ‘l’ stands for the resolving of our problems through the “freeing of both halves of humanity from the stultifying and distorting rigidity of roles imposed by the domination hierarchies”.

\textsuperscript{83} I understand the relation of power to which Bauman refers, to be an under-developed version of Plumwood's [1993] description of dualism, which involves radical exclusion.
Using the idea of freedom as the ability to rule, Bauman (1988, 59 - 61) shows the consumer market to be a form of control through relocated competition. He describes it as follows. The original, long-term association between capitalism and the freedom of the individual has been slowly transformed by the transformation of both elements. Firstly, capitalism is no longer defined by competition, which has worked itself away. The entry of new competitors is fiercely difficult. Instead capitalism is a "highly organised system, steered and monitored from a limited (and still shrinking) number of control centres, each armed with ever more potent and costly technological means of gathering and producing information" (ibid.).

Secondly, the notion of the freedom of the individual has changed as well. In the earlier days of capitalism there were few people who could really use their freedom in capitalist competition as tycoons and the majority was in the lower ranks of the Panopticon-like hierarchy. Only a few had the privilege of real freedom. According to Bauman, this pattern has been replaced with a pattern of success as "symbolic distinction", achievable through consumer rivalry. As a result for the first time in history freedom of choice and individual self-assertion can be practised on a grand scale - by the masses. This means that instead of the small reserve of people who had true freedom to operate in an unconstrained way through mastery of the competition in capitalism, a large number of people now have the freedom to participate in an unconstrained way through this substituted competition as a consumer. The basic network of power relations is not damaged and the basic principles of contest, monopoly and elimination are unchanged.

In this way business-as-usual capitalism is greatly boosted by the free individuals who through symbolic rivalry increase the demand for the products of capitalist industry to increasingly elevated levels. Those who are controlled by the consumer market are willing and happy to embrace it because the individual freedom-as-choice leads to social approval together with the illusion of community and security. In this way with the market offering security and rationality and constant advertising to reinforce the certainty of the social system, the process of the reproduction of the power structure is dependent upon individual freedom of choice. This means that the structure of domination is quite stable.
In this transformed version of capitalism only a minority of people in northern, business-as-usual societies do not have a sufficient level of affluence to participate as 'free choice' consumers. The minority is still subject to the Panopticon for control and social welfare for security (Bauman, 1988, 67). Bauman (2001, 130) writes that the birth of the consumer society began in the last quarter of the twentieth century when the labour theory of value was challenged by the marginal utility theory. The marginal utility theory recognises that all that is required is a "desire seeking satisfaction" (ibid.). The consumer makes the final decision about the value of a thing. Bauman's deconstruction of capitalist control of the consumer is useful but his work suffers from a lack of a liberatory theory. However, the point that I find useful is the constant, albeit symbolic competition between all free individuals who make choices. That is, competition between choosers.

Using the Jacob's ladder metaphor Bauman's analysis can be imagined as one or two huge ladders leading to real power at a dizzying height and many other symbolic ladders of varying heights, mostly only small and leading only a little way up, with nothing at the top and unstable support. Without thinking people clamour for any ladder to put all their energy into. Some will try to climb several ladders at once which occupies a huge amount of energy and is a huge emotional and physical challenge. I have already used Bowles' and Gintis' (1986) distinction between a radical democracy and a liberal democratic polity as one between learners and choosers. It is very crude, however the connection between the choosers as one of (symbolic) competition is interesting. Thinking clouded by firstly, an unquestioned assumption of hierarchy and secondly, ‘naturalised’ competition is a problematic state of affairs when the goal is functional, participative community. Although simplistic the distinction between choosers and learners is an extremely important one. We need to learn a totally different way of thinking and acting. Business-as-usual needs a different axis.

7.1.3 Hierarchy and Planetary Consequences

Competition is rivalry for the 'up' of the hierarchical 'up-down' positional possibility. For example in economics, firms attempt to gain profits at the expense of others and in sociology, rivalry is intended to lead to advantage over some other group or person.

84 There is an omission of a critique of oppression against class, race, gender and nature in Bauman's work.
According to ecofeminists such as Warren (2000) and Plumwood (1993) business-as-usual practices underpinned by naturalised hierarchy and competition are inextricably linked to planetary crises. Warren (1994a, 2, 181) explains that classism, ageism, ethnocentrism, racism, imperialism, colonialism, heterosexism, naturism, militarism and sexism are social systems of domination at the heart of business-as-usual social organisation and the cultural status quo. She explicates that these systems of domination are parallel to the patriarchal domination of non-human nature (1994, 2 and 181). Continuous rivalry underpinned by dualistic understandings of the lifeworld at every level, is inextricably connected to inevitable social and ecological crises. I have explicated how hierarchy is at the centre of this culture of business-as-usual which is the economically determinist, corporate-enhanced, technologically optimised, globalising culture. This is to show that cooperative community practices are oppositional, radical and transformative towards sustainable communities.

7.2 Towards Cooperation

As indicated in chapter six, there are a variety of understandings of community schools. These range from the broader community being encouraged to participate in the school, perhaps to use the facilities; through a view of the school which is seen as teachers and students functioning as a unit; to a view of the school which is understood to mean all of its participants including parents, extended families and community members participating as a functional community. This latter view is akin to Townsend's (1994) concept of the core-plus \(^85\) school. To my knowledge there is not one agreed meaning although my understanding is: a school that is focused towards the education of learners, particularly children, in the context of a collaborative community. I have chosen this definition because the clear focus is the education of the children and because it is sufficiently broad to be able to include Western Australian systemic schools.

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\(^85\) Described in chapter one of this dissertation.
7.2.1 Community Schools as Cooperative Learning Communities

The learning school described by Senge et al. (2000, 11-18) has three nested systems of activity: the classroom, the school and the community. The learning classroom comprises teachers, students and parents inside the learning school which includes superintendents, principals, administrators and school board/committee members. The learning community is the third nested level which comprises community members and lifelong learners. I understand a community school as follows:

The school, as we see it, is a fulcrum point for educational and societal change. Classrooms can only improve, in a sustainable way, if schools around them improve. Schools depend on the districts and communities of which they are a part. And sustainable communities, in turn, need viable schools for all of their children and learning opportunities for all of their adults. In our view, a learning school is not so much a separate place (for it may not stay in one place) as a meeting ground for learning - dedicated to the idea that all those involved with it, individually and together, will be continually enhancing and expanding their awareness and capabilities. (Senge et al., 2000, 6)

This description suits my notion of a school as a cooperative learning community. I do not wish to define it in any more detail, because definitions can become limiting and exclusive, and the understanding of community schooling is not the focus.

7.2.2 Cooperative Inquiry

This cooperative inquiry research was conducted at Riverdale School which at the time the research was implemented, was a new community school of approximately sixty-five students. The school espoused a philosophy of holistic education86 in its mission statement and objectives. On the basis of my experience and insights gained at Forest School, my interest in Riverdale School was to participate in and research the process of developing a school that aspired to become a functional, effective, holistic community. In my Forest School research, I found that a school community has the potential to work as a personally and politically transformative community. I found that this potential is increased where there are two factors: a commitment to a parent culture of learning and a commitment to a democratic dynamic.

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86 In this chapter, to accurately reflect the language and aspirations of the group, I will use the term ‘holistic’, which is commensurate with a ‘light’ understanding of EfS. I think it would be fair to say that it is a ‘whole health’ humanistic understanding, in an environmentally aware, light socially critical context.
Cooperative inquiry as Participative Research

Cooperative inquiry is a research method, which features participative knowing as its core and requires a commitment to real sharing of power. Heron describes cooperative inquiry as research “with people not on them or about them” (1996, 19; emphasis given). This means that the researchers do not take any enhanced capacity to reinterpret or reframe meanings. At the outset I need to clearly point out that this report is my own report as the initiating researcher and as a co-researcher with valid practical experience of the research. This report is a report about the cooperative inquiry research. It is not the report. The report that was accepted by each of the co-researchers is attached as Appendix Two. The report was prepared for the school peak decision-making body.

Reason describes cooperative inquiry as:

… a way of doing research in which all of those involved contribute to both the creative thinking that goes into the enterprise, deciding what is to be looked at, the methods of inquiry and making sense of what is found out, and also contribute to the action which is the subject of the research. It is a form of education, personal development and social action in together. (1988)

Heron (1996, 36) writes the defining features of cooperative inquiry as follows. All the subjects are as fully involved as possible as co-researchers in all research decisions about both content and method which are taken in the reflection phases. There is intentional interplay between reflection and making sense on the one hand and experience and action on the other. There is explicit attention through appropriate procedures to the validity of the inquiry and its findings. There is a radical epistemology for a wide-ranging inquiry method that can be both informative about and transformative of any aspect of the human condition accessible to a transparent body-mind with an open, unbounded awareness.

Cooperative inquiry validity is based on the dynamic, cyclical congruence and internal integrity of the forms of knowing which are experiential, presentational, propositional and practical. It is also based on the forms of validity, which are adopted to free them from distortion. The significance of cooperative inquiry validity is its human flourishing. Cooperative inquiry validity is the flourishing of collaborative human

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87 The report has been edited only enough to enable it to conform to the confidentiality requirements of this dissertation. Otherwise, I made no other changes – not even spelling mistakes.
88 Equivalent to Wilber’s vision-logic stage (1996, 269 – 270).
existence, which is in balance through the practical linking of reason and experience. As well as validity procedures there is a range of special skills suited to such all-purpose experiential inquiry. The full range of human sensibilities is available as an instrument of inquiry.

Heron describes epistemic and political participation as the two complementary kinds of participation in cooperative inquiry (1996, 20 - 21). Epistemic participation refers to the knower-known relationship. The researchers as the knowers participate as subjects in the occurrences, events and experiences to be known, which are the subject of the inquiry. There are four reasons for this, according to Heron (ibid.). Firstly if the propositions about human experiences that are put forward as outcomes of the research are not grounded in the researcher’s experience then they are of questionable validity. Secondly, where the experience itself involves a deep kind of participative knowing, the most rigorous way for a researcher to ground propositions-as-outcomes in her experience is to “ground the statements directly in their own experience as [a] co-subject/s” (ibid.). Thirdly, the researchers can only study the human condition by their own embodiment of it – they cannot study the human condition by getting outside of it. They can only do this using all of their human sensibilities in relations of dialogue and reciprocal participation with others likewise engaged. Through language use such an inquiry is a culture of experience and intersubjectivity. Fourthly, this full participation in the experience of the knowing enables the researchers to know the external – individual and collective, as well as the internal forms of knowing – the affective, prehensive forms.

Heron (ibid.) comments that in traditional quantitative research, conclusions are not grounded in either the researcher’s or their subjects’ personal experience. In traditional qualitative research the researchers attempt to ground their conclusions exclusively in their subject’s embodied experiences, which is fundamentally unethical in that it “fundamentally misrepresent[s] their personhood and abuse[s] by neglect their capacity for autonomous intentionality” (Heron, 1996, 21). The lacking element is political participation which is concerned with the relation between inquiry participants and the decisions that concern them. Political participation in cooperative inquiry is based upon the axiom that participants have a human right to participate in decision-making, including research decision-making which generates knowledge about them.
Consequently participation enables participants to formulate and articulate their design values and preferences. Participation also allows them to thrive in the study as complete human persons and to be portrayed as such in the outcomes. Conversely participation prevents them from being misrepresented and oppressed by the researcher’s own values base which is implicit in any unilateral research design. I have used Heron's cooperative inquiry report guidelines (1996, 102 - 103) to describe the Riverdale research. I have based this report largely on Heron's (1996) work because his work is extremely detailed in its approach to all aspects of cooperative inquiry.

Although this chapter is an outcome of the group’s work, it is my work rather than the group's work. The chapter does not have the consensual agreement of the group. That is because at the point of dissertation writing, three years after the group initially met, people have now scattered and it would be very difficult to reconvene the group. Having established that this chapter is my work, it must be emphasised that my work is fully dependent upon the work of the group. Ethically I cannot speak for the group because there is not consensual agreement for me to do that. However as a co-researcher I can speak about the research from my own perspective as participant in the same way that other participants can. Further, as initiating researcher I can speak from the perspective of facilitator of the group. But on this occasion I am speaking for myself rather than for the group. However, I can say with absolute certainty that if the Riverdale cooperative inquiry did not form part of my dissertation, it would cause many of the participants great sadness!

**Information About the Co-researchers**

As the initiating researcher, this was my first use of the full form of cooperative inquiry as a research method. Previously I had used various participative research methods including action research and a partial form of cooperative inquiry where I was the only researcher working in the action cycle of the research. Substantial previous teaching experience meant that I was quite confident with group facilitation, particularly using participative, democratic facilitation styles. Midway through this research project I was fortunate to be able to attend a one-week workshop on group facilitation and 89

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89 This research involved the collection and collation of ethnographic data in a culturally different context. The reflection cycle comprised three co-researchers, who participated in the two reflection phases of each cycle.
cooperative inquiry with John Heron\(^9\). Heron is an experienced facilitator and cooperative inquiry researcher who at the time, had over thirty five years of experience in participative research (1996b). The workshop provided me with significant opportunity to discuss methodological problems and develop strategies to address them.

At Riverdale School there were twenty-three research group members who were all parents of Riverdale children and some were also part time teachers. Only two were male. At least fifteen members attended each meeting except one. (The smaller meeting was a sub-group of members who were available to attend a whole weekend workshop at Crossingtown, approximately one hundred kilometres from Riverdale.) The cooperative inquiry group comprised an adult representative from over one third of the families of the school. Prior to involvement with the group the participants had been involved with the school for between two months (since the beginning of that particular school year, which was the first year that the school had accepted children) and eight years (since the first committee met to discuss the idea of forming a community school). I had been involved for eight years. Prior to group commencement some participants knew each other quite well and a few participants did not know some others by name.

Members shared in common a passion for the principles and values on which the school was envisioned, a concern for the appropriate development of the school and a desire to enhance their parenting knowledge and aptitudes. A number of different sentiments were the prime motivations for school involvement. These included: a better educational opportunity for our children; a deep commitment to the stated school philosophy of holism in education and life in general; the stated ecological orientation of the school; the opportunity to be involved with a dynamic, highly motivated group of parents who subscribe to a similar philosophy; personal growth for the parent; the possibility of an extended family environment for our children and ourselves and the possibility of regular, positive male models for children who do not have an adult male in their lives on a regular basis. Several group members were concurrently studying university courses and several held university qualifications. Apart from me, no-one had post-graduate research experience.

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\(^9\) The workshop, on facilitation and cooperative inquiry, was held at Curtin University in March, 1996.
Background to the Inquiry

The inquiry came into being for two purposes, the first of which was as a contribution towards the development of the school and the second was to answer research questions for this dissertation. The context was the need to explicate the concept of holistic education for the school community. This was because the term ‘holistic education’ was in regular use by school members but often caused confusion due to the variety of interpretations, some of which appeared to be contradictory. Prior to commencement of the cooperative inquiry research I had proposed the group’s research questions as follows. What is holistic education? Do we have holistic education? Do we need to transform ourselves or our community? If yes, in what way? How do we do it? Can we come up with a holistic model for education?

Recruiting Group Members

Participants contacted me after invitation through an advertisement in the school newsletter. I sent participants personal information about myself including my personal philosophy, together with the loosely framed research questions and a plan for the first meeting. I also attached a brief overview of cooperative inquiry, which was taken from Reason (1988). Murdoch University paid for child-care and morning tea to enable meetings to take place. This support gave the group three advantages. Firstly, it had status as a university sanctioned activity, secondly it had the capacity to enable participants with small children to attend and thirdly, the morning tea facilitated a relaxed, nurturing outing, which group participants did not have to prepare for in advance.

At the induction meeting people introduced themselves, described why they became involved with the school and expressed their optimism for the school, the community and the children. Several mentioned their concern that not all parents were fully involved with the school. Ground rules were discussed and accepted. There was discussion on whether the group should be open or closed, resulting in general

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91 This information has been placed with the collection of research documents from Riverdale School, in Appendix Three.
92 The ground rules were: 1. Silence is okay. 2. To pass is okay. 3. One person at a time. 4. Everyone is co-responsible for the direction, continuity and atmosphere of the group. 5. Everyone is a co-researcher and a co-subject. 6. Everyone has equal importance, and their knowledge and experience is equally valid and valuable. 7. No-one has more power or status than anyone else. 8. Tears are okay. 9. Strict confidentiality with identifying information in writing and in talking to others 10. Process is continuously negotiable (Rule 9 and 10 were added 27/4/96)
agreement that it would be open for several meetings and other school members should be encouraged to attend. It was generally accepted that a sense of community was expected to emerge after a couple of meetings, which would mean subsequent new members would find it difficult to feel comfortable with their lack of inquiry group background. The group spent considerable time talking about its own process and about the potential for synergistic solutions. The process of cooperative inquiry was overviewed and the importance of genuine collaborative responsibility for the group and egalitarian participation was stressed. It was agreed that each meeting would be audio-recorded and that the transcription would be distributed so that everyone could read and consider it prior to the following meeting. The participants were sent the transcriptions, which we agreed were to arrive at least two days before the next meeting. The transcriptions were also distributed to the school administration and board members in the interests of an open, informed school community. It was agreed that in the interests of protecting the anonymity of group participants, so that they could participate totally freely, I would not print any identifying information in the transcripts. This would include pseudonyms which may be able to be decoded. Therefore verbal contributions are represented in the transcripts as simply paragraphs or sentences with a space between. Further, it was agreed that I would prepare an agenda for distribution with the transcriptions to focus the beginning of the following meeting.

Information About the Type of Inquiry

Firstly, a brief word about 'cycling' in cooperative inquiry. Heron says:

Cooperative inquiry involves two or more people researching a topic through their own experience of it, using a series of cycles in which they move between this experience and reflecting together on it. Each person is co-subject in the experience phases and co-researcher in the reflection phases. (1996, 1)

The research was a full cooperative inquiry, which means that all members participated fully in the action and reflection cycles, alternating between the roles of co-researcher and co-subject. It was internally initiated which means that as the initiating researcher I was fully engaged with the culture of the research community prior to the commencement of the cooperative inquiry group. This means that as initiating researcher I could also be a full co-subject in the action phases of the inquiry. Heron (1996, 42) uses 'role' as another descriptive indicator for cooperative inquiry groups,
whether they are same role (for example, all doctors), reciprocal role (as in intensively interacting equal status roles, for example husbands and wives), counterpartal role (for example, doctors and patients) or mixed roles (for example, different kinds of practitioner). The Riverdale cooperative inquiry group members had a variety of roles within the organisation but approached the cooperative inquiry task as members. Their roles were not a specific subject of any action cycles. Because of this, in my opinion the group should be described as ‘same role’. Heron (1996, 42) suggests that an inquiry can be classified as inside or outside, depending on the topic and where the action phase is focused. The Riverdale inquiry was largely inside in that most of the action was located within the group. It was a group-based inquiry. The action phases comprised largely whole group discussion, building upon individuals' experiences of the school, education, their children and their desire for holism in education. Members also further considered the topic between meetings which was reported at the following meeting. It is only this comparatively small contribution to the action cycle that prevents a full ‘inside’ classification. With regard to group boundaries (Heron, 1996, 44) this group has closed boundaries in that there was no data or feedback expected from non-group members. The group members themselves generated all data.

The Inquiry Structure and Pattern

A group bootstrap approach to structure was taken. Heron (1996, 40) describes this as an entirely self-initiating group which, “pull[s] itself up by its own bootstraps into the practice of cooperative inquiry”, and “experiment[s] de novo with its own version of the process.” He comments that this is an advantage in that there is no dependence upon the initiating researcher. Dependence upon the initiating researcher can result in the failure of the inquiry to become truly cooperative. As initiating researcher, it was my first full-form cooperative inquiry and I had the benefit of Reason’s research to share, but Heron’s book had not yet become available. Our group learned the process together and I have no doubt that the inquiry was truly cooperative.

Including the induction, the group held six two-hour meetings and one weekend workshop. The transcriptions enabled people to reflect more fully on particular aspects and details of the meetings and to refer accurately to statements made, during
conversation in subsequent meetings. The transcriptions were well received and highly regarded by participants. For example, one person's view:

After reading the transcript of the last session, I stayed awake for hours and hours that night, because I felt so inspired by the group. (Transcript, 30/3/96)

The group used two kinds of action in their action cycles: the group conversation during meetings as well as the consideration of the proceedings between the meetings. As from the second week, each session began with a reflection cycle about the previous meeting then discussed the topic for discussion in the subsequent action cycle. The discussion on the agreed topic then took place comprising the action cycle. Usually, there was some reflection on this before morning tea but sometimes morning tea was taken at the conclusion of the action cycle. Usually, a reflection cycle was held after morning tea before another discussion as the action cycle and finally, a short reflection cycle. This routine was emergent. It was not pre-arranged but was continuously re-negotiated as per our ground rules. It did not always follow this order, for example we tended to stop at or just after twelve o’clock irrespective of which cycle we were involved with, because the child carers needed to leave and because children were hungry.

Sometimes the group would find that the discussion during the action cycle was unbalanced, over-energetic or not meeting people’s needs in some other way, so we would go back to a reflection cycle to discuss the problem and how we should proceed. We did not usually use cooperative inquiry technical language, for example we did not usually announce that we would be moving into a reflection cycle. Someone would simply steer the conversation to reflective talk about process and direction before returning to the topic with a renewed orientation. Sometimes in the middle of an action cycle we would need to discuss process, so the reflection would ‘interject’ in the action, then the action would quickly be resumed. All of the meetings comprised this regular ‘code switch’ from a discussion of the topic at hand to a discussion about the process of the group itself.

A clear way to describe the group’s approach is to differentiate between talk about how we conducted discussions, which we called process, and the talk about the topic and people’s examples which was around the agenda topic. The process talk technically comprised the reflection cycles and the agenda talk comprised the action. Reflection and action tended to interweave on a reflexive need basis. An analysis of the transcripts
reveals that some meetings were mostly reflective in character, discussing the process required to address our agenda while some meetings were mostly action in character\textsuperscript{93}. Invariably there was substantial action as individual consideration between meetings, both in the few days after the meetings and after the transcripts had been read. Several people commented that they thought about the cooperative inquiry group constantly between meetings, for example:

For me, I just felt the momentum of this thing last week: it’s been, like, waiting, waiting for the fortnight to finish. For me it was that enjoyable. It was good. (Transcript, 30/3/96)

Heron (1996, 45, 95) classifies two polemic and complementary cooperative inquiry cultures as Dionysian and Apollonian, with the latter being logical, planned, rational and controlled and the former being the opposite, emergent and creative. In Heron’s words:

The Dionysian inquiry takes a more imaginal, expressive, spiralling, diffuse, impromptu and tacit approach to the interplay between making sense and action. In each reflection phase, group members share improvisatory, imaginary ways of making sense of what went on in the last action phase. The implications of this sharing for future action are not worked out by rational pre-planning. They gestate, diffuse out into the domain for action later on with yeast-like effect, and emerge as a creative response to the situation. (1996, 45)

Heron cites Marshall and McLean:

The group seemed to be taking its own line, doing what was intuitively right rather than carefully discussing and planning the research process. The emphasis was more on reflection in action than on addressing each as distinct and separate. (1996, 46; emphasis given)

These two passages describe the culture of our group very well. In particular the phrase ‘reflection in action’ is fitting. Apollonian and Dionysian cultures are not separate and distinct however. They are interdependent, complementary aspects within each cooperative inquiry group. Heron (1996, 47) suggests that an over-emphasis on the Apollonian may cause the inquiry to lose depth, range and richness whereas an over-emphasis on the Dionysian creativity and situational responsiveness may cause the inquiry to lose its focus and cease to be an inquiry. As the initiating researcher this is a

\textsuperscript{93} For example the second half of the first meeting is primarily reflective, whilst the second meeting is primarily action, addressing the topic in a sustained manner after a ‘chaotic’ reflective start. Meeting three was the weekend workshop which was not recorded because we decided that detailed notes would be taken. Meeting three was more structured and was deliberately more clearly divided into action and reflection cycles. Meeting four was clearly reflective at the beginning followed by considerable sustained action with short reflective episodes interwoven, as was meeting five. Meeting six was a balance between reflection and action whereas meeting seven was mainly action.
tension that I occasionally inwardly struggled with during the research term but now at the end of the series, I am convinced that we had an appropriate balance between depth, range and creativity.

The Inquiry Topic, the First Reflection Meeting and the Launching Focus

The first reflection meeting comprised the second half of the first meeting. This took place after the induction activities, which were the personal introductions, commitment to the group and formal agreement of ground rules. Unfortunately much of this segment was not recorded due to technical error, so no transcript is available. However considerable shaping of the topic took place during this period as well as during the recorded remainder of that meeting. During this meeting the group became very clearly aware of its own synergistic capacity and discussed its own movement into this energy in several short reflective interludes. During the life of the cooperative inquiry group I had handwritten in the margins of the transcription of this first meeting:

I am limited to words on a page, which cannot convey the energy that was present in the group from day one. It is the energy of the group that my chapter needs to remain faithful to. Participants frequently referred to it while talking in the group – it was often quite palpable. Reading through the meeting transcripts, the written words, already a step removed from the process, do not convey the emotion within which the spoken words were encapsulated. It is evident that something is missing from the transcripts, because reading them leaves the impression that individual people’s contributions are ‘not quite logical’ – they do not easily lead from one person to another. Yet, being present in the room, the conversation seemed very logical, very warm, very open and very group centred. Often, the speech became a group synergy, in which people’s contributions were given and accepted with overwhelming clarity, continuity and ease. (April, 1996)

During the first meeting as the phenomenon of synergy was happening a participant described it as a special creative energy which is, “greater than the sum of its parts, and can enable a group of ordinary people to come up with big, genius-sized ideas.”

Subsequent speakers spoke about it in the following ways:

It seems as if there is a certain amount of energy that happens in a group like this as well. When ……. was talking before, I just felt like going over and giving her a big hug.

I felt the same when you were talking.

In that, there is safety. It's okay to just let everything hang out.
That we can all be here and celebrate our humanness, rather than our
group of parents, or our maleness, our femaleness...just our wholeness and our
humanness. (Transcript, 15/3/96)

The topic being discussed was the broad question of education and learning at the
school. The whole subject was constantly emotionally charged because parents were
discussing their children with considerable love and warmth. There was a deep pride
and strong warmth for the school, which many of the parents had given very many
hours of voluntary labour to in developing policies, writing submissions and finally,
physically renovating and rebuilding the school building. The research question was
refocused in the agenda for the following meeting, to: "What will be our model of
holistic education?" With the transcript of meeting one and the agenda for meeting two I
distributed condensed notes about holistic education from Weil, 1994, "The Art of
Living in Peace." In hindsight the first two meetings comprised of pooling our
experiences of the school to understand each others’ perspectives and use of language as
well as to develop a trust in the process and in each other. The pooling also supplied
necessary contextual data as a basis to effectively construct the topic, since a problem
prior to the research was one of contradictory understanding of commonly used
language, such as the term ‘holistic education’.

A Summary Story of the Research Cycles and the Launching Proposal

In order to describe the group process, which is oral, I must decontextualise it, fragment
it and write around the fragments. It needs to be ordered, logical, linear, thence several
times removed from the original emergent process. I am facing a problem with our
language itself in that the conventions of speech enable non-verbal and pragmatic
factors to convey meaning, atmosphere, emotion and energy whereas the conventions of
print deny other than print possibilities and limit non-specified meanings94. These
constraints frame and limit this chapter and in particular this section and the next.
Within these constraints I will describe the ongoing fate of the launching proposal in
order to present a focused resume of the activities of the meetings.

Between meetings one and two a group member wrote the following note, which was
placed on top of the agenda for week two:

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94 This difficulty replicates the problem which cooperative inquiry seeks to address. This is the problem of the dissonance between
primary experience and the conceptual representation of it.
Your question on last week’s agenda: “Can we come up with a holistic model for education?” Yes, if we can model holistic living to our kids and live the model! (Transcript, 30/3/96)

This is the first time the idea appears in the transcriptions and it seems to be the dawning of the recognition that the group might develop a model by practising it. The second meeting transcription contained several references to modelling behaviours and values for children and the idea was floated that children behave as the adults around them do. It was recognised that we need to role model what we wish the children to see:

What do we want our kids to see, what do we want our kids to do, so we need to be role models for them. So… we need to look carefully at the role models that are being played. Maybe we need to stand back and plan… from an experiential point of view, for the kids. Then role model those experiences. It's not easy. (Transcript, 10/3/96)

It was acknowledged that this role modelling needed to have depth and authenticity:

[Y]ou need to change yourself… [it] is not just changing the surface, playing a role for the benefit of the child, it's something far deeper than that, … For me, change happens as a result of understanding, and for me the most important job of any human being is to understand who the hell they are, of all of their resources, not just the resources that are available through the community, through the culture, but stuff that's inside us. (Transcript, 30/3/96)

Polemic views were put about aspects of the school. For example one person said, "the teachers are wonderful." In response another member said

teachers are well intentioned as are parents, but there are many wrongs in society and our approach as it is at the moment, perpetuates the wrongs. (Transcript, 30/3/96)

In the same meeting it was observed that holistic education is about empowerment, and needs to be implemented across the school. The same speaker commented that parents are not all empowered to be justly involved in decision-making. With significant approval from others the next speaker articulated the idea that the group’s project is to transform the school:

I feel that the school has started off, as a traditional school. It's fairly traditional, it has classes, and teachers, and assemblies, which to me is very traditional. I feel that our project is to transform the school, in the ways that we decide that we will go. (Transcript, 30/3/96)

In this meeting the group spoke about their own potential for transformation using the processes of the holistic paradigm. It was an extremely empowering recognition. We also recognised that "sit[ting] on egos" can prevent the implementation of the vision,
having the effect of keeping the vision disparate from the common practices. The group articulated the need for a method or bridge from the vision to the implementation. This discussion is what I referred to earlier as the ‘pooling’ of information and attitudes, affirming each person’s perceptions, to construct the base for the further development of the launching proposal. In summary this meeting is the beginning point of the verbalising of the idea that we need to live the holistic education model we describe, or that we formulate holistic education as we do it.

The third meeting was the weekend workshop that was attended by half a dozen members and it was intensive. It was an examination of the emotions/feelings generated during adversarial types of discussion and during cooperative types of discussion. It was a powerful and moving workshop during which time viewers articulated that they felt warm and involved with the cooperative discussion but alienated and disempowered while watching an adversarial conversation. During the adversarial conversation the participants and viewers observed that there was considerable energy spent on winning rather than focusing on listening and attending to the message. However it was later acknowledged that there is a place for adversarial conversations to uncover all views on a subject but it was considered to be best suited to a context which was cooperative and in which there was agreement to take adversarial positions.

The meeting notes included the following:

We wish to live the results of this cooperation, living as if it shows. The issue of communicating this experience to others arises again: it has to be shared. (Notes from meeting Crossingtown, 13/4/96; my emphasis)

Meeting three was a turning point. Until and including meeting three we had talked ‘about’ modelling holistic education: about living in the way we wish our children to grow and develop. As a result of meeting three the focus during meeting four became narrower and more specific – that of putting this ‘living it’ concept into practice (actually ‘living it’, rather than talking ‘about’ it). The research question for the group became, “How do we implement participatory decision-making in our school community?” In my opinion the group’s understanding of this question included its broadest application, being, “How do we ‘live’ cooperative, participative discussion?” This was in recognition that our family contexts are also part of the school community. This question also included the cooperative inquiry group – how does the group operate
so that we are ‘living’ it during meetings?

Meeting four was a primarily action cycle meeting. It was the first of the whole group meetings to follow my workshop with John Heron. The meeting was deliberately more assertively structured around Heron’s recommended cooperative inquiry research format\(^95\). My new understanding of the role of the initiating researcher was different from that with which I initiated the group. From this point on as initiating researcher, I felt liberated by a new awareness of Heron’s paradox of ‘leading people into freedom’ (1996, 67). My previous understanding of my role as facilitator was unclear in that I was very conscious of my positional power and unsure of how to participate as a true co-subject and co-researcher. I now understood it as simply another ‘role’, one that the others did not have. This means that I was a co-researcher and a co-subject like everyone else but I also had the extra role of being initiating researcher, which comprised the task of facilitating and mentoring the group in the process of cooperative inquiry.

Meeting four investigated various aspects of participative decision-making. Reflections on the Crossingtown meeting (adversarial and cooperative talk styles) occupied the early part of the meeting and led to in-depth exploration of a process orientation to life and learning. Early in the meeting a speaker said:

\begin{quote}
I thought it was such a shame that we have to call it a cooperative inquiry before I develop the attitude of listening and cooperating. Why can’t we do that all the time? That’s just me. That’s where I have my growth to do. Cooperative inquiry is the way to move ahead, the antagonistic style is the adversarial style. If, through this group, each of us develops the habit of listening, encouraging, learning, then this group will do well – the attitude will grow… I see (cooperative talk) as drawing community, the whole ethos that we developed… It’s just so uplifting, whereas the confrontational discussion is destroying. If we can get into the habit of doing that outside the group, this group’s going to be too big to handle in this room. (Transcript, 27/4/96)
\end{quote}

This contribution framed an intense awareness of listening and cooperative conversation which set the tone for the meeting. The following speaker provided the insight that participatory decision-making is an integral component of a holistic education model. Effective communication was regularly alluded to during the course of the meeting which explored polemic perspectives on current school issues, resulting in a process of

\(^95\) See Appendix Four for more detail about the implementation of Heron's validity procedures.
incorporating the poles\textsuperscript{96}. It was frequently acknowledged that the teachers were in the middle ground of each polemic, since they were expected to implement policies that were unclear and loosely articulated. The process of resolving these dilemmas was regarded as the key to resolution. The process needed to be participative, cooperative and just.

A speaker presented the view that to this point in their children’s lives many parents have not been involved in decisions about their children’s education at all. She said:

   All of a sudden, parents are allowed to say what they like and don’t like about school. We’re getting opinions now, which we have never had before. We’ve never been given the opportunity before. (Transcript, 27/4/96)

She clearly explained that many parents require education about the process of participation in education decision-making – the context and the process are new and could easily be overwhelming. From this perspective it can be understood how it is easier and less traumatic for the parents not to participate in educational decision-making although it is to the detriment of the school as a whole. Not participating in decision-making is also to the detriment of the individual parents who miss out on the opportunity to contribute their perspectives on the shaping of their children’s education and context, and miss out on the personal growth that the process offers.

‘Values’ was put forward as a basis for a non-confrontationist participation process. Towards the end of the meeting a composite picture of holistic education was collaboratively constructed around a concept of well-integrated, whole-of-life development of children who can confidently participate in decision-making and then be responsible for them. The context was described as around adults who have a reasonable base of their own inner resources and who were committed to personal growth of themselves and others. The final part of the general discussion stressed the importance of adult continual self-awareness and awareness of the space one is currently occupying. To exemplify a commitment to continual self-awareness, a speaker said:

   My trigger is: “what would I like my children to learn from this reaction of mine?” One day I said to (son) “why are you shouting?” And he said: “Because you taught me.” (Transcript, 27/4/96)

\textsuperscript{96} Issues discussed are listed here: 1. The argument in favour of and against a school bell. 2. The balance between structuring and flexibility in schooling. Independence of children versus dependence. 3. The need for discipline and the need for freedom in education of children. 4. Holistic education versus traditional education with the traditional as part of the holistic.
To conclude the meeting a brainstorm was held which produced an overview of the group’s response to the question of how to implement participatory decision-making in the school. In summary this meeting was the first whole group meeting that began with an articulate view of and commitment to ‘living and being’ holistic education. It consciously practised this through cooperative, participative, inclusive process. Its outcome was a meaningful written contribution to participative decision-making as well as a group of people with a practical understanding of their own, unique model of cooperative, participative decision-making.

Meeting five comprised considerable sustained action with interwoven short reflective episodes. While meeting four emphasised a clarification of terms and practical understanding of cooperative process, meeting five focused on the application of that understanding to the school context. The research question was the same as week four: "How do we implement participatory decision-making processes in our school community?" Much of the action cycle material comprised the identification of specific systemic problems. Considerable disillusionment was expressed. The gist was of people speaking their feeling of disempowerment with the school decision-making structure, being heard and understood and putting forward possible solutions for discussion. This resulted in a collective picture of what the school decision-making structures and processes need to be in order to more fully reflect the values and principles upon which the school policies were constructed. The outcome of this meeting was a blackboard diagram of what the school decision-making structure might look like as well as a group of people with a practical understanding of its own model of holistic education.

Meeting six produced a mission statement for school decision-making which was incorporated into the report from the group about school decision-making. (This is attached as Appendix Two). It was the final meeting on the implementation of participative decision-making in the school, as part of the group’s overall project of moving the school towards a functional model of holistic education underpinned by its own policies, values and principles. The meeting was a balance between reflection and action. The reflection was about the process to this point. The action was two-fold: firstly, discussion on the nature of a holistic adult self, as facilitator of a context and process conducive of the holistic development of children and secondly, discussion on the role of cooperative inquiry as a process in the school.
At the beginning of meeting six some disappointment in the place of the group in the context of the school was expressed. It had been anticipated that as part of the progress of the group, the group would be able to make a lot of changes in the way the school worked but to this point it had not. A clarification of recommendations about decision-making in the school followed this contribution. The following vignette, linking meeting five to meeting six, exemplifies the move from talk about school decision-making to personal growth.

I did feel that we were able to focus on things using the blackboard a lot better than we did in other meetings. I did feel that we were getting there. But it’s events since then that have made me feel that we aren’t getting anywhere. That all this is just rhetoric, which is getting us nowhere.

Gee, I think it’s getting us heaps of places, you know? This is entirely selfish, but for me, my movement has been quite dramatic, and I feel changes happening in my self, my attitudes towards my children, mainly personal growth. Since this group started, it's been amazing. (Transcript, 25/5/1996)

Meeting six was a substantial contribution to the construction of a model for the implementation of participative decision-making in the school. It was also a significant contribution to the linking of participative decision-making to notions of the self and personal growth as part of the overall interpretation of the group’s understanding of holistic education. The meeting had begun with an expression of dissatisfaction about various aspects of the school and a sober acceptance of the group’s lack of influence on the school’s decision-making to this point. However the meeting ended with solidarity in expression of the need for commitment to self-nurturing and of the need to nurture teachers, parents and children towards a stronger sense of community and care for each other. The personal was very clearly connected to the political. Finally the need for a celebration on progress in the school to this point was expressed and people described how their children had changed for the better since commencing at this school. The report from this group to the school’s main decision-making body was finalised during this meeting.

Meeting seven, which was the final meeting to be transcribed began with the research questions, "How can we make our lives more peaceful?" and “How can we make our school community more peaceful?" It was the final stage in the progression of the launching proposal for this research, culminating in a discussion within the context of
‘living holistic education’. Early in meeting seven a speaker stated, “Peace is an attitude of mind which comes into the language that we speak.” A descriptive picture of peace was constructed by the group, which was continuously linked to individual examples of self and relationships with children. An investigation of violence followed which resulted in the construction of a verbal picture of violence in its various types and shades and again, with linkages to individual examples of self and relationships with the children. The speakers particularly in their examples relating to children at home and in the school setting, regularly linked violence and peace:

To me, this is essentially what [relationships within the family should be]. You talk about violence, but there are degrees between that violence and --- (inaudible). The only words I can find for it are 'soul contact'. Where you actually experience the other person. I think this is every child's right. (Transcript, 8/6/96)

Overall meeting seven was a ‘pooling of experiences and language’ discussion within the broad context of ‘living holistic education’. It was a neat culmination of the taped series, which demonstrated holistic education as cooperative process that clearly links the personal to the political. The group revealed clearly that the core of holistic education is a commitment to enact it in each waking moment through personal and political change towards identified values and principles as goals. A series of workshops for the whole community, largely organised by cooperative inquiry members, followed the cooperative inquiry series. The workshops were not part of the 'official' dissertation research other than my reflective practice journaling.

The Story of Inquiry Initiation, and Initiating Researcher Non-Dependency

With hindsight I can now confidently say that the move away from dependency on me as initiating researcher began during week one. It became very evident early in this research project that there was a deeply perceived need for the group and many participants had much to contribute. Co-researchers made it clear in week one that they wanted to help develop the school in the direction of its own mission statement and objectives and they were very keen to explore issues around parenting and personal growth. During meetings one and two I felt very concerned about the extra power that I had by virtue of being initiating researcher, especially when the group deferred to me for processual direction. This was clarified during the workshop with John Heron. I
became clearer about the distinctive facilitating role of the initiating researcher, which was as tutor of the group in cooperative inquiry research method.

As well as being the processual tutor I was always seen to have a separate role in addition to that of the other co-researchers in that I monitored the tape recorder, transcribed the tapes, convened the meetings and prepared the agendas. There were regular checks that the group process and discussion was acceptable for my dissertation, for example:

Most of this is what you see as being valuable to your thesis, isn't it?
(Transcript, 27/4/1996, 3)

I am certain that participants were very keen to make sure that the proceedings were as useful for my dissertation as it was for the school. I described earlier that the research was internally initiated which means that I was fully engaged with the culture of the research community before the cooperative inquiry commenced. This means that I was participating with friends, some of whom I had known since the idea of starting our own school first emerged. In the sense that I was working with friends, they were keen to help me with my dissertation. Nonetheless, I would not say that this situation maintained any kind of dependence on me as initiating researcher. We were simply a group of friends researching a way to improve our situation, with me as the facilitator of the process.

In the sense that one of the outcomes of the research was a chapter of my dissertation, by definition I had a unique self-interest in the group’s success, which must at some level have been apparent, at least by virtue of our human capacity for perception. However I can say with definitiveness that as process facilitator, I was always inclined to be cautious. If there were a facilitation unbalance then I would say that I under-facilitated rather than over-facilitated. I indicated earlier in this report that our group maintained a reasonable balance between the complementary Dionysian (creative, emergent) and the Apollonian (logical, planned, rational) aspects of the research. This is a tension that I occasionally inwardly struggled with, anxious for outcomes suitable for this dissertation, but confident that our group processes were producing outcomes for school development. There were times when I felt like calling an end to a period of chaos, afraid the group was losing its direction but also wondering whether the chaos
would be worth staying with for a possible novel outcome. Sometimes I did call an end to chaos but most times I did not. Sometimes others called an end to chaos but always, in hindsight, chaos that we patiently tolerated was resolved through an innovative solution. Any occasion wherein we felt that we had lost direction in an action cycle was easily rectified with renewed vigour during a reflective cycle or by having a morning tea break. I have continued with this topic in the commentary on validity, in Appendix Four.

A significant issue with participatory decision-making in the school arose between meeting five and meeting six. It is worth noting that the research question as it appeared on the agenda for meeting seven was, “what is peace, what is violence? Do I live in peace?” This had been formulated earlier in the series when it was intended to investigate particular aspects of holistic education during each meeting and when it had been anticipated that the work on participatory decision-making would be completed. However early in meeting seven it became clear that there was a real need to continue with participative decision-making. The group did not substantively address the pre-set agenda topic during that meeting. This is evidence of the co-researchers’ actual political participation in the research. Further, it demonstrates the relevance and usefulness of the research in the life of the school and its meaningfulness in the lives of the group members.

In short, I believe that the move away from me as initiating researcher to true collaborative partnership in the research was commenced during week one and accomplished by the beginning of week three. After this time I maintained a low-key role as process tutor, in addition to convening meetings and preparing the transcriptions and agendas as negotiated. This is what Reason calls, “paradigmatic power” (in Heron, 1996, 153) and is necessary for the paradox of “leading people into freedom” (Marshall and McLean, referred to by Heron, 1996, 153). I do not believe that my power as co-researcher and co-subject was greater than any one else’s after week two and prior to this my anxiety about my influence probably, on balance resulted in too little facilitating rather than too much. I consider this issue further in the section on validity in Appendix Four.

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The first group to start the school first met in 1986. The resulting application was unsuccessful, so the group wound up. A new group convened four years before the school actually commenced, to form the school. I was in both groups.
The Validity of the Inquiry

Heron (1996, 167) cites Goethe as follows, "being too busy with justification misses the point of life, which is about exuberance." Heron claims that valid outcomes alone are insufficient because joy in human life is beyond epistemological validity. I write about validity with a broad-minded outlook because during the inquiry, validity was certainly not my prime concern. The inquiry, which was more interested in transformation than information, was particularly concerned with exuberance - in the development of ourselves as loving partners and guides for the nurturing and educating of children. So our inquiry busied itself in a beautiful way with the point of life, which was the development of the school. After the fact, I can claim that the outcomes of the group are valid. In Appendix Four, I write about the validity of this inquiry in three categories. These are: validity in ethnography; the radical inquiry skills that support validity in cooperative inquiry; as well as a description of validity in cooperative inquiry, which includes forms of knowing and validity procedures. The validity procedures were: the balance between convergence and divergence, challenging uncritical subjectivity, chaos and order, authentic collaboration, variegated replication, concerted action as well as open and closed boundaries.

7.2.3 Competition and Cooperation as Antitheses

This section illustrates the processes of adversarial discussion and cooperative discussion. The adversarial discussion that subsequently became a critical incident for the cooperative inquiry group and also for the dissertation spontaneously emerged at the end of the after-dinner discussion during the weekend workshop. It was preceded by a little good red wine so participants were very relaxed. My interpretation of the event is that five or six people were participating in the discussion, which became quite argumentative in character. Participants gradually stopped participating and watched the proceedings, initially with some interest and later losing interest. After an hour or so, there were only two totally engaged participants remaining in the discussion. Over the course of the next hour or so, viewers lost interest and removed themselves to read or go to bed. From a co-researcher's perspective it was a profound, deeply 'real' action cycle!98

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98 During the proceedings, however, I felt quite anxious in my role as initiating researcher. (How could this possibly happen to my research? Why didn't I just design research in which I could go and count things, where I could control the variables?!)
The reflection and action the next morning, which started quite early, was equally profound as people carefully, thoughtfully and cooperatively described their experience of the incident. The initial reflection cycle was subsequently regarded as an action cycle and it was then analysed through further reflection. Subsequently the two scenarios, the adversarial of the previous evening and the intense cooperation of the morning, were contrasted. Thus the whole workshop was emergent. It formed valuable shared experiential knowledge that was recycled with progressively greater depth and width through presentational and propositional forms, producing an ever more expansive and relevant practical knowledge, for the remainder of the cooperative inquiry series.

Below I have placed the Crossingtown meeting notes into two matching lists, to contrast antagonistic approaches with cooperative ones. The words and phrases were taken directly from the notes of the workshop. I have done this to accurately reflect the sentiment of the research participants who came to these insights. The lists illustrate the Jacob's ladder and Sarah's circle metaphors quite clearly. The experience of the two settings, the adversarial and then the cooperative and then the discussions and reflective cycles around the experiences, enabled the group to deeply see and feel the profound significance of respectful, caring, cooperative conversation in maintaining peacefulness, warmth and balance in meetings, relationships and life. The group recognised that we all need to transform our behaviours away from those underpinned by adversary towards those of cooperation so that we could model practices for transformation.

The following part of the section is a light interpretation of a small collection of vignettes describing the development of skills associated with inter-relationship, mutual support and community building. These are to portray what I have learned from the cooperative inquiry process as a participative co-researcher. Interestingly, it shows the almost hilarious simplicity of one of the main messages of this research, which is: we need to really listen to each other so that we are open to hearing. As one research participant said: "we have to call it a cooperative inquiry before I develop the habit of listening and cooperating." Upon reflection, my response is equally stunning: I have to do a PhD before I develop the attitude of listening and cooperating! Importantly, I 'knew' about the value of listening before as we all do. The difference this time, like the character of Siddhartha in Herman Hesse's novel, is that I am arriving back at the same place after cycles of reflective experience and I know it very differently. This time I
have a postconceptual knowledge based upon a multifaceted practical knowing, which is entirely different to how I knew about listening before. This time I *know* its deep meaning. With my colleagues in research I have transformed myself. I suggest that cooperative inquiries can only be transformative if people really listen to each other.

Below is the simple analysis of feelings and responses to the two scenarios, the adversarial and the cooperative, at the Crossingtown Workshop.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Adversarial (Highly competitive, antagonistic)</th>
<th>Cooperative (Highly collaborative)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participants [in argument] felt angry with the antagonist. Felt angry with selves, later.</td>
<td>Participants felt warm, peaceful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants felt loss of reason.</td>
<td>Participant felt articulate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants felt pressure to respond to the moment.</td>
<td>Participants take time to breathe and think peace.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants felt a strong need to defend the position taken. Looked for points of divergence.</td>
<td>Participants look for points of congruence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants felt loss of ego.</td>
<td>Participants encourage and support each other.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants felt frustrated. Participants felt disappointed s/he took adversarial stance.</td>
<td>Participants felt fully present.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants felt need to compartmentalise the mind. Strongly focused on discussion points. Did not notice other people.</td>
<td>Participants observe responses of others - engage collaboratively.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant felt emotionally drained. Participant felt as if s/he would never be able to describe feelings.</td>
<td>Participant felt accepted, relaxed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant felt loss of face. Soul destroying.</td>
<td>Participants felt uplifted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant <em>should not</em> listen, because he might hear, and might subsequently change his mind so that he might 'lose' the battle. Participant felt s/he needed agreement from opponent.</td>
<td>Process emphasises learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viewer felt that s/he was not asked or wanted.</td>
<td>Process draws community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viewer wanted to remove him/herself from space.</td>
<td>Atmosphere is respectful, caring.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viewer felt it as an intense disempowering experience, with the energy draining out of the body. Clammed up.</td>
<td>Palpable energy in the room. Feels delicious.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process leads to exclusion of some people (may participate passively or not at all). Disinterest by other viewers, who left.</td>
<td>Everyone is fully attentive. Sitting positions are important - a circle is helpful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process involves point scoring, non-listening.</td>
<td>Congruence of ideas, listening intently.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process produces responsive reflex actions and there is not necessarily time, moments, between points.</td>
<td>Process influences attitudes and feelings of the meeting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process involves focus on winning. No position for 'in-between'. Only either/or, win/lose. No time for reflection.</td>
<td>Outcome is intuitive and resourceful.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process may produce fear.</td>
<td>Process brings empowerment and collective wisdom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advantages: Encourages daring, and enlightening. It is an exercise of the mind.</td>
<td>Advantages: While listening, you may learn a great deal. (While talking, you don't usually learn much! However, you may be able to clarify your thoughts with assistance from others who listen.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 Tabulated Outcomes of Crossingtown Workshop

In brief, the adversarial can be experienced as a single minded, fear-oriented, disempowering, unsupportive, alienating encounter, which is oriented towards the win of the win/lose positions. Even for the winner it may be experienced as emotionally draining and may involve loss of face. It can be frustrating and may involve anger. It could quite easily involve forms of violence, due to the lack of receptivity to the opponent's state of body or mind. One participant in the adversarial conversation stated during the next cooperative inquiry meeting:

Looking back on it, when we were discussing it, I was loving it. But when I reflected on it, I didn't see it as conflict. I felt that we had two totally different views. I was right into: "this bloke is wrong, and I've got to show him he's wrong." That's really what I was trying to do. I was
looking for points of divergence, rather than points of congruity.  
(Transcript, 27/4/1996)

On the other hand the cooperative discussion is more likely to be perceived as warm, nurturing, intuitive, respectful, caring, attentive, uplifting, relaxing and empowering. The group frequently remarked that the key difference is that of the attitude of listening. The antagonistic approach involved only sufficient listening to prepare the next point for battle. The 'battle' needs to be quick and reactionary to enable defence of one's position at all costs. The collaborative approach on the contrary is underpinned by focused, pervasive, attentive listening. The listening itself is a full-bodied listening with awareness of the being of other participants, the atmosphere of the room and the positive, encouraging energies being generated. Intuitive, resourceful, wise, congruent outcomes are the more likely outcomes.

In the discussion during week four following the Crossingtown meeting, it was suggested that combatants might benefit from a trigger to help them remember to focus on the listening such as: "what can I learn from this person?" Advantages of the argumentative approach were discussed including the potential for stimulating discussion and an enlivened mind. Because of the considerable disadvantages of the approach however, it was proposed that adversarial roles may be acted through and used for benefit by prior agreement, that is within a cooperative framework such as in cooperative inquiry groups or in cooperative meeting contexts.

Listening is a key ingredient in cooperative inquiry groups, which led the group to the position that it is the process of learning, listening and inquiry, rather than the goal, or conclusion that is of most importance in holistic education. This is because as soon as one is holding a position that one accepts, one stops listening, focusing instead on explaining or converting the other person to one's own view. It was explained this way:

But it just seems to me that there is a great danger at arriving at conclusions and setting those in concrete, and arriving at a belief system as a result of that conclusion. It seems to me that in educating our children, the most important thing is to teach them that the whole of life's experience is process. There will be decisions that will be made as a result of the process, but the decisions themselves should be part of the process, with continuing re-evaluation, rather than arriving at a point where there is a conclusion. There seems to be this innate thing that is within us. We begin to focus on only the things that are necessary for us to present, so that we exclude a whole range of things that are outside of the direction that we want to go. We can't see it. (Transcript, 27/4/96)
This contribution is very powerful. The way we hold our belief system is very important. For "the whole of life's experience to be process", we need to be constantly aware that we might be wrong or mistaken so that we can learn from the fluidity of a process orientation to life.

Cooperative inquiry itself is underpinned by the metaphor of Sarah's circle, which is genuine collaboration. When the purpose of the group was articulated and understood to be that of transformation to a culture which practices listening and cooperation, to model the qualities for the children, a purpose of having meetings became to practise listening and collaboration. For example:

I think the whole purpose of having meetings is to learn to participate, it doesn't just happen. (Transcript, 27/4/96)

The group discussed that the co-responsibility for the transformation to the school policy/vision, or for what goes on in the school must belong to everyone since everyone participates and colludes. Only by participating in the transformation can people be transformed.

Towards the end of the meetings, group members began to acknowledge that they could not change the people who were not committed to strategies for transforming towards implementation of the school vision and policy documents. There was an increasing comprehension that one could only transform oneself, not other people or their practices. However, people recognised the sometimes-dramatic changes that had happened within themselves in clarifying learning and through reflection and being able to change beliefs that were now seen to be inadequate for their new 'beingness'. For example:

[S]ince this group started, it's been amazing.
I want to second that. The personal growth has been really great for me. The issue that came up during the week, just knowing that this group was here was one of the reasons why I didn't leave the school, actually. (Transcript, 25/5/96)

As the participative decision-making came to a close the group contributed towards the production of a substantial report on the changing of the structures of the school to reflect the need for attentive listening.

Throughout the life of the cooperative inquiry group people had discussed the importance of deep listening and not trying to defend their beliefs, to be open to
learning. A number of people from the cooperative inquiry group attended meetings with the school's peak decision-making body and had often mentioned the deep chasm between the meeting processes in the two groups. The group frequently discussed that the school's peak decision-making group members seemed to think about their views prior to the meeting and then defend those views, rather than being prepared to listen. For example:

We don't have a structure that empowers the principles that we have espoused. I have a great challenge with this. This business of empowerment, of empowering people. The most valuable resources that we have in this school are our students and our parents, and we're alienating too many of them…

I'm not talking about the participatory aspect, I'm talking about the ideals, the barriers...the skills if you like, listening skills .... all of these things that we value so highly...(Transcript, 25/5/96)

The school's peak decision-making body subsequently accepted the great majority of the cooperative inquiry group's recommendations for structural changes. However very little actually changed as a result. It seems that the structures are less important than people's hearts. By this I mean if people are committed to attentive listening, caring for each other, respecting others' views and finding genuine ways to transform themselves and their practices to be congruent with their espoused philosophy, especially for their own children, they will do it. They will find a way around obstructive structures. Gandhi said: "The wars are in the hearts of men." As a result of the Riverdale cooperative inquiry research I now have a deeper understanding of the meaning of this.

The main point of this section has been the significance of cooperative, collaborative ways of working with other humans and of the need to commit to transformative practices. When we really listen to each other with respect and care, a warm, palpable synergetic energy enables intuitive solutions to problems. It seems so simple and yet it is so difficult! We all need to learn how to perceive, to deeply listen, to actually communicate - and to constantly see the possibility that we might be wrong. It is a state of heart, of spirit.

**The Outcomes of the Inquiry**

Upon completion of six cooperative inquiry meetings and one weekend workshop, the group presented a report to the chairperson of Riverdale School. I wrote the report using
meeting transcriptions and direction from the group. We then discussed the drafts at subsequent meetings until it met with group members' approval. The group suggested changes that were subsequently implemented before submission to the chairperson. The report was an important outcome, and is appended as Appendix Two. The recommendations made in the report were accepted and implemented almost as a whole by the school's peak decision-making group. As a result considerable changes were made to the school's decision-making structures. This was a meaningful step towards inclusive, participatory decision-making. However, as stated above, I cannot claim any real changes to the school's decision-making processes or that a cooperative, consensus-based mode of practice was actually implemented. Using Heron's model we can see that the recommended practices need to be grounded in practical knowing. Propositional knowing is necessary but insufficient.

There are significant outcomes in terms of group process, which I claim support the findings from Forest School in which I found that a school community has the potential to work as a personally and politically transformative community. In terms of Heron's model my knowledge about Forest School is more propositional than practical. I demonstrated through an analysis of Forest School participants' stories that Forest School has enabled many of its participants to learn and further develop skills associated with inter-relationship, mutual support and community building. This was also the case at Riverdale but in particular, the Riverdale research shows that specific learning with a goal of practical knowing is enhanced by commitment to a process of transformation together with a deep personal commitment to the values and principles embedded within the paradigm. The cooperative inquiry group aimed to support the transformation of the new school community to a level of functional cooperation and just participation in decision-making. I claim that we were successful in producing information about this transformation that was generated through the group process and presented in our report (Appendix Two).

As Heron states, (1996, 161) valid outcomes are not just a set of propositions, but also a "set of inward and outward actions and social transformations among the members of the culture being researched." This means that we need the transformational as well as the propositional. Here, I would have run into terrible trouble as the initiating researcher because the transformation is in only two places, firstly within the process of the group
and secondly, within the personhood of each individual group member. It is a deep practical knowing gained through cycles of intentional action. I can say that it was the intention of the group to develop their model of holistic education through practice of it and I can say that there was tacit agreement to proceed with this action through its continuation and subsequent development. I can use pieces of transcript (cited elsewhere in this chapter) to justify these claims. These are in my opinion, reasonable claims of transformational outcomes. By themselves however, using Heron's approach they are not strong claims as they rest on my authenticity as the researcher. They become strong claims through the validity of the process itself. (See Appendix Four for detail about the validity claims of the Riverdale research.) In the case of the Riverdale research there are two very strong transformational claims.

Firstly, as a co-researcher with a practical knowledge of this process I can say that the process itself was a very significant factor in the transformations. I have indicated above that the group came to awareness very early in its history, during meeting two, that the model we sought to develop would be developed through practice. The outcome from meeting two onwards was intended to be a practical knowing. The validity claims for the cooperative inquiry research are also verification of the claims of transformation. For example concerted, interweaving, dovetailed action and reflection in progressive cycles towards the intentional development of a practical model of transformation, when carried out authentically and truthfully, is a part of the verification of the claim of transformation. When the cycling is properly implemented and the group continues agreeably towards consensus about the achievement of their goal, then the validity of the piece of research is the strength of the claim about transformation. The second strong claim about transformation as an outcome of the Riverdale research is that in effect the cooperative inquiry process was the basis for the participative decision-making model the group sought to develop, enabling both personal and community transformation.

I am saying that by using this research method the group could practice and develop their cooperative, participative conversation techniques and refine their practices of inter-relationship in the process. As a result significant community building within the group occurred. These are anticipated outcomes of this method, which rests upon:
An axiological theory of the intrinsic value of human flourishing in individual and social life, in terms of an enabling balance of autonomy, cooperation and hierarchy; and about participative decision-making in every social context as a means to this end. (Heron, 1996, 16)

Thus in this case claims about transformation towards the participative model are also claims about the strength of cooperative inquiry itself, which are underpinned by a participative paradigm of research with two complementary participative wings, the epistemic and the political. Epistemic participation refers to the knower-known relationship. Where deep participative knowing is involved the propositions-as-outcomes should be grounded in the researchers' co-subject experience (Heron, 1996, 21). Researchers thus intersubjectively study the human condition by embodying it using all of their human sensibilities, in dialogical and reciprocal participative relations with others similarly engaged. Through language use, full participation in the inquiry culture of experience and intersubjectivity enables the researchers to know the external – individual and collective, as well as the internal forms of knowing – the affective, prehensive forms (Heron, 1996, 21). Political participation, in terms of the relations between inquiry participants and full participation in the decisions that affect them, enables all participants to thrive in the study as complete human persons. I am saying that at the risk of creating a circular series of justifications, the process of cooperative inquiry was itself the transformative model that the group sought. The group recognised this early on and through continued participation, progressed their own individual and collective transformation towards cooperation. In considering the research goal first named in chapter three, of changing the model of experience that constitutes society in order to change education and society, here is a very empowering and very effective transformative practice that enables collaborative transformation towards cooperation.

7.3 Synergy as the Practice of Cooperative Spirit

The answer to the problem of why we do not always have the attitude of listening and cooperating, which was framed during the fourth meeting of the Riverdale cooperative inquiry group, is that we don't know how to until we develop a holistic, practical knowing which is grounded through our own experience. Cooperative inquiry has the capacity to make adversarial, hierarchical social models problematic and to bring about
transformation to a cooperative culture. Unintentionally at first and later intentionally, the group developed the model through practice.

In this chapter I illustrated one group's effort to bring about a culture of cooperation in a school. The group succeeded in bringing about a culture of cooperation inside the group. The group's process enabled the participants to transform themselves and practice the development of their skills of cooperation and collaboration inside the group. The participants reported that they were also successful in practising the skills of cooperation in their own families, particularly after the reflection cycles following participative experience of adversarial and cooperative conversations. This means that for the participants, the research was informative and transformative. As a co-researcher my experience is that the structures and rhetoric of participation and cooperation may be in place but these do not have 'meaning' without practical knowledge of the lexicon. That is, information does not necessarily bring about transformation. A participative structure may be in place in a school, but this structure cannot guarantee that cooperative communication processes such as those underpinned by genuine listening and respect will be used. The Riverdale School research showed that unless people take the opportunity to review their practices and deliberately and systematically change any practices that are not in line with their personal values or intentions, they might not have a practical knowledge of how to participate cooperatively in participative structures that already exist. This insight explains the piece of wisdom from Forest School, which is that one can only learn about community in community. This means that one can learn, practise and enhance cooperation and collaboration with people who are also committed to practising these skills.

I suggest that the community wisdom of Forest School was derived through considerable formal and informal reflection about community processes and experiential trials followed by reflection. In other words, I suggest that Forest School informally and tacitly developed a version of a cooperative inquiry culture. It seems to be a reflective, practical culture of learning. The research with Forest School showed that during the first changing of the guard, when the population of the school grew too large for the whole-school community decision-making processes to work effectively, a new and more efficient coordinating group structure together with structures for conflict resolution, addressed the community’s dysfunction. The community spirit brightened as
the community moved into more harmonious day-to-day functioning based on sound processes, communication and structures. On the other hand, Riverdale School started with functional decision-making structures, which they decided needed to be more participative and inclusive. Processes needed to be devised to enable more inclusivity. These were devised and accepted, without major changes being noticed by cooperative inquiry group members.

The conclusion to be drawn from these two experiences is that the structures at Riverdale School were not the essence of the problem. The main problem was the quality of the interpersonal relationships, particularly in the decision-making groups that were adversarial and argumentative in nature. Listening and learning was not a feature of the school decision-making, other than in the cooperative inquiry group. In conclusion, it seems that good decision-making structures are necessary but not sufficient. Good processes and relationships are essential, and listening is vital. Collective and individual unconditional personal responsibility for community vivacity is crucial. Effective work sharing arrangements are also essential, to prevent burn out and enable rewarding participation. A healthy, cooperative school community is underpinned by communication and effective participation. For this to occur, people as individuals need to intentionally and deliberatively choose to learn to be cooperative. If individuals choose not to cooperate, the community feels the consequence. I investigate the notion of the self in considerable detail in the following chapter.

There is much more to Heron's and Reason's work than a model of cooperative inquiry for transformation. To take the cooperative inquiry model without its contextual paradigm is to take the figure without the ground and is making the same conceptual mistake that Heron points out is made by the researchers of many stripes who separate the primary meaning from the secondary meaning. This means that research which takes concepts as separate from the lived reality confuses the map with the actual geography with the effect that the map is privileged. Therefore I have grounded this chapter, and in particular the next paragraphs, deeply in the lived experience in which it is set. In this light, I shall reflect upon the synergy of cooperation that was embedded in the Riverdale School cooperative inquiry process. I believe that a spirit of synergy is within the paradigmatic ground of cooperative inquiry. In the same sense as an ethnographer, I can generalise other people's congruence because of the words spoken to me. On a
deeper level, I can generalise other people’s congruence because I shared in the primary
generation of these meanings. I shared a deep resonance of harmony through the lived
indigenous experience of the group with the other participants. Because we agreed on
the words to describe the meanings, I will assume the group's understanding of my
conceptualisation of my experiences. They may describe their meanings of these
experiences differently, but this does not invalidate my conceptualisation of my
experience. My reflections about synergy follow.

My proposition is that one of the contributing factors in the transformation of the group
was synergy. According to the dictionary synergy is simply combined or cooperative
action (Delbridge et al., 1982, 1753). However 'synergism' has two meanings:

1. Theol. The doctrine that the human will cooperates with the Holy
Ghost in the work of regeneration.
2. The joint action of two substances, as drugs, which increase each
other's effectiveness when taken together. (Delbridge et al., 1982,
1753)

The group discussed and accepted that synergy produced a special creative energy
enabling the development of a new and different creation, which was greater than the
sum of its parts. Heron (1996, 115) writes that paying heed to a phenomenon enables
perception and memory to be born together. Throughout much of the group process, I
felt the synergy and paid heed to the tone of the meeting. Where deep resonance was
occurring, noticeably in times of cooperative discussion, where open listening and
profound attentiveness were happening, there was a tone of synergy which enabled a
quality of meaning to be understood that is not fully detectable through reading the
transcripts. Reading the transcripts leaves the reader with some 'gaps' in meaning. It
would be difficult to read the transcripts without having been present and understand the
full meaning embedded in the words used. The perceptions of synergy were deeply felt,
so that participants were moved to comment upon the phenomenon on occasion. I could
not confirm the first dictionary definition of 'synergism', being the theological
connotation of the human will cooperating with the Holy Ghost in the work of
regeneration, but I can certainly understand how others could have interpreted this
phenomenon in this way. My version is that of the human will engaged in the work of
regeneration in a spirit of cooperation. This leaves open the possibility of the
theological interpretation. I certainly support the second definition which is two
substances coming together to increase each other's effectiveness, if we may presume that people are 'substances' to fulfil the definition! So, I use the word 'synergy' in a deeper way than simply combined action and I suggest that cooperative action which is deeply intentional around the will to regenerate has the potential for synergism which can go beyond the ordinary capacities of the participants.

Bohm describes a phenomenon that he calls: participatory consciousness, which resonates with the cooperative inquiry group experiences. In his words:

The object of a dialogue is not to analyze things, or to win an argument, or to exchange opinions. Rather, it is to suspend your opinions and to look at the opinions - to listen to everybody's opinions, to suspend them, and to see what all that means. If we can see what all of our opinions mean, then we are sharing a common content, even if we don't agree entirely. It may turn out that the opinions are not really very important - they are all assumptions... We can just simply share the appreciation of the meanings; and out of this whole thing, truth emerges unannounced - not that we have chosen it. If each of us in this room is suspending, then we are all doing the same thing. We are all looking at everything together. The content of our consciousness is essentially the same. Accordingly, a different kind of consciousness is possible among us, a participatory consciousness - as indeed consciousness always is, but one that is freely acknowledged to be participatory and can go that way freely. Each person is participating, is partaking of the whole meaning of the group and also taking part in it. (Bohm, 2000, 26 - 27)

Bohm describes participatory consciousness as true dialogue.

The phenomenon that our group referred to as synergy was evident in times of deep attention and cooperation, when an atmosphere of an intense care about each other, the children or the school was present. I would be very comfortable to refer to these episodes as true dialogue. On these occasions in our group, the body language was forward and open and each person was fully engaged in the conversation. Communication was genuine, heartfelt and primal - beyond the words used to convey the meaning. Buber (1964, 51) describes this communication as a communion: "experiences everywhere a turning to, a dynamic facing of, the others, a flowing from I to Thou." He highlights the fathomless union, which is possible through unity. I appreciate these descriptions because they resound deeply with our experience. I suspect that our group has just scratched the surface of what is possible and yet it was the basis for considerable transformation. I suggest that with the will to regenerate or transform, a spirit of synergy is the paradigmatic ground of cooperative inquiry. This is in line with
Wilber’s (1996, 289) notion of spirit as goal and ground of evolution. The spirit of peace is already here, pulsating all around us (Fox, 1990, 51). We do not need to look elsewhere to find it. We only need to really listen to each other and be open and present to our experience. In the Riverdale group, the synergy was first observed in week one. This approach does not need intensive, lengthy, difficult or rigorous practices. We simply need the will.

Adversarial discussions lead to defensiveness and 'closing' of awareness, minimising the possibility of creative resolutions and maximising the possibility of win-lose scenarios that are conducive to competition and domination. During adversarial conversations people are defensive, 'protective' of self, closed, and other than the active conversants, disengaged. Adversity seems to be the antipathy of synergy. I deduce that an adversarial stance is not likely to produce a creative, synergistic solution to a problem, at least not by the combatants. Neither is it likely to bring about the insightful fulfilment that is felt during synergistic conversation. Buber has this to say about ineffective dialogue:

A debate in which the thoughts are not expressed in the way in which they existed in the mind but in the speaking are so pointed that they may strike home in the sharpest way, and moreover without the men that are spoken to being regarded in any way present as persons; a conversation characterized by the need neither to communicate something, nor to learn something, nor to influence someone, nor to come into connexion with someone … what an underworld of faceless spectres of dialogue! (1964, 37 - 38; emphasis given)

Buber calls this the third kind of dialogue, where the first kind of dialogue is genuine dialogue, the second kind is technical dialogue and the third kind is monologue disguised as dialogue, which has no real intention to gain a solution.

### 7.3.1 The Heart of a School Community

In the previous chapter, I wrote about the potential of communitarianism for compassionate action. I shall now explore the dynamics of compassion further. As a participating co-subject in the cooperative inquiry group at Riverdale, my experience with the group was deeply rewarding and joyful. I felt accepted, respected, cared for, cared about and that my interests mattered. I understood that these feelings were mutual - felt by all members. I perceived passionate contribution by all group members towards our goal of enhancing the community of the school towards holistic education. I believe
this is the spirit of compassion which M. Fox (2000, 96) sees as the "culmination of all our passions in the fire of love", corresponding with the fourth or heart chakra. Fox describes compassion as "taking heart energy and putting it …to work in the world." An important element of compassion is forgiveness, which leads to freedom and healing (Fox, 2000, 104). Fox takes reference from Hildegard of Bingen, who wrote about the "greening power of the Holy Spirit, which made all things creative and nourishing" (Fox, 2000, 105). Fox sees compassion as power-with, passion-with and healing-with and describes it as the flip side of anger, perhaps at injustice that can motivate our compassion where we stand strong against adversity. For me, working with the cooperative inquiry group was an experience of co-creativity and nurturing that generated the energy within the group which was palpable and which was described as synergy.

I contend that synergy through the practice of collaboration is a deeply gratifying human condition, perhaps one that is profoundly sought after in our society. Writers such as Fox (2000, 331) who describes our deeply felt yearning for union would agree. I suggest that spiritually based groups have had access to experiences of synergy, maybe since the dawn of time in the case of Aboriginal people, but that the modern dualistic hyper-separation of theory from practice, mind from matter and mind from spirit has negated such experiences because they could not be objectified and quantified. Further, in a secular, impious society such experiences are discouraged or privatised.

Fox proposes a rediscovery of the virtue of generosity emanating from a sense of our own abundance and creativity of spirit, to live gracefully, simply and joyfully. I understand this sentiment because it resonates with my perceptions and images gained from meaningful cooperation and empathic care. It also resonates with a trait that I observed at Forest School, which I called 'unconditional personal responsibility'. On the basis of the Riverdale School experience I propose that cooperative inquiry is also a process capable of nurturing and enhancing the phenomenon of the community spirit described at Forest School. Caffery also wrote about community spirit in reference to the school that expressed the desire to regard school as an extended family and in this school she found, through the association of parents and other community volunteers, "a visible and tangible love-force" (Caffery, 1987, 18). I simply wish to draw attention to the repeated references to the phenomenon of community spirit or heart. Using Heron's
validity terms for participative researchers as co-subjects, I have a practical knowledge of the phenomenon on the basis of my own involvement at Riverdale. I suggest that the 'loving outwards' of the unconditional personal responsibility described at Forest School is an attribute of the community spirit which is underpinned by compassion and generosity. As I described in the previous chapter, a school can also be subject to the traumas of unresolved conflict and adversity that can cause deep individual and collective suffering. What I am saying is that there is a cyclical process of connecting primary with secondary meaning to build community spirit and at the same time, develop a postconceptual process of social transformation resulting in embedded practical knowledge: a bridge to sustainability.

Collaborative Learning as Gentle Resistance

In the way described in this chapter, collaborative action is anti-hierarchical and is a gentle, nurturing resistance practice. Cooperative inquiry and the resultant collaborative culture act gently to resist the 'isms' of domination embedded in our language. This means that it acts to resist the theory/practice dualism and the dualisms that result in the violence arising from naturalised hierarchical presuppositions on which our late modern society is based. Through the creation of practical knowledge of transformation we can do more than sit on the margins, as described so lovingly by Davison (2001). We can actively and passionately resist domination and oppression and contribute towards the development of an anti-hierarchical culture of justice and peacefulness at school and in our lifeworlds. We can create a school community as an intentional transformative learning community.

7.3.2 Deepening of the Democratic Dynamic in a School Community

In chapter six I referred to Bowles and Gintis (1986) while developing the notion of a democratic dynamic. The democratic dynamic was described as a spiral, ongoing process of dynamic interaction between rules and actors resulting in actors being increasingly dedicated to and skilled at democratic participation and decision-making and the actors rendering increasingly democratic rules. The anti-hierarchical process of cooperative inquiry advocated in this chapter, grounded in a postconceptual worldview affirmed by social transformation, would form a particularly suitable context for the democratic dynamic and could be expected to facilitate the deepening of the dynamic. It
was emphasised by Bowles and Gintis (1986, 187) that the rules and culture must be mutually reproducing, being concurrently determined. Quandaries were said to be formed by undemocratic rules or anti-democratic actors, producing an anti-democratic dynamic. The antidote to these quandaries was said to be conscious, aware, intention, commitment to constant learning, commitment to unconditional personal responsibility to enable compassionate action as well as democratic, egalitarian structures, rules and processes. The practical knowledge developed and outlined in this chapter affirms the possibility of the democratic dynamic in a school community and suggests that cooperative inquiry would be fertile ground for the deep development of democracy.

I agree with Flick (1998) in that respectful dialogue can transform conversations and thereby the culture of the group. Because we need to model what we wish children to learn, we need to learn how to 'be' in cooperative groups before we attempt to teach and model the skills to children, or we will be saying, "do what I say, not what I do." I believe that we need to learn to listen attentively with an understanding, empathetic mind and to be aware of the need to be properly heard. When we learn to cooperate, to truly 'relate' - openly listening, sharing power and respecting each other and our histories, we are also helping to change our culture because genuine cooperation is not widely practised in our society. Thus learning how to intentionally create actualising groups and communities in schools is helping to avert social crises by co-creating a caring, reconciling, healing society that is changing the model of experience that constitutes society and education. As has been previously stated, this commitment requires constant learning.

Croft (1996) has commented that a fractal of community mimics the whole of the community in behaviour. This means that the relationships between a few members of the community use similar processes of relating to that of the larger community. This means that the community spirit spoken of by Peck (1987) and described in chapter six of this dissertation is present in the fractals, which are the relationships between individuals, as in the whole community. It seems to me to be quite self-evident that a positive, vital community spirit is generated through supportive, nurturing relationships at all levels. This means that genuine cooperation is important for the emergent community spirit.
Chapter Summary

My purpose in this chapter has been to explore the intentional development of a peaceful community of learning and transformation characterised by compassion, generosity, responsibility and a deepening democratic dynamic. A key idea in this chapter is the recognition and transformation of hierarchy in relationships. I emphasise listening to hear how others perceive the world. Caffery's (1987) research shows that after starting a participative, community-focused culture, people sometimes drift back towards more individualistic, private goals. This suggests that a culture of learning and transformation towards cooperation must be a continuous personal and collaborative recommitment. During my research with Forest School I noticed a characteristic that I labelled unconditional personal responsibility, which seemed to be the giving out of love for children and other members of the school community. As a result of the Riverdale School cooperative inquiry project, I now understand this to be the essence of a cooperative community spirit.

The research presented in this chapter confirmed that cooperative inquiry is a research process for producing information and social transformation for education, community building and development, personal development and social action. Through a valid research process, the group transformed ourselves so that we related with intention, care, compassion and cooperation. We learned that a platform of cooperation underpinned by respect is a sound basis for agreement to use divergent approaches to problem solving including adversarial approaches. We learned that periods of intense cooperation often produce a 'palpable' synergy resulting in innovative and creative outcomes that seem greater in effect than the combined actions of the individuals involved. Bohm (2000, 26) calls this a participatory consciousness. On these occasions the communication is primal, that is beyond the words used to convey the meaning. I suggest that cooperative action, which is deeply intentional around the will to regenerate, has the potential for synergism that can go beyond the ordinary capacities of the individuals. I contend that synergy through the practice of cooperation is a deeply gratifying human condition for which we have a deep yearning but which has been negated by the modernist, dualistic hyper-separation of theory from practice, mind from
matter and mind from spirit. This is because these experiences are not objective and quantifiable and because they are discouraged in a secular, impious society.

Because of the resonance of Fox's proposition for a rediscovery of the virtue of generosity with the trait I labelled unconditional personal responsibility at Forest School, I suggest that cooperative inquiry as a process is capable of nurturing and enhancing the phenomena of community spirit. It does this through the practice of empathic, partnership relationships rather than adversarial relationships. Cooperative action can contribute towards the development of an anti-hierarchical culture of justice and peacefulness at school and in our lifeworlds.

Bowles and Gintis (1986) make the simplistic but crucial distinction between choosers and learners and I have developed this notion by working in Bauman's (2000) notion of competition between choosers, which underpins the business-as-usual economy. I put forward that resistance to this can take the form of commitment to on-going cooperative learning about and commitment to socially transformative action. Further, the embedded process could be expected to facilitate the development of the democratic dynamic, which requires a cyclic concurrent interplay of rules and actors. In this way through intention, a school community could deepen its practice of democracy so that its community has embedded experiential, propositional and practical knowledge of cooperation. This means that they understand and they 'know on the basis of experience, reflection and practice', how to transform society through deep cooperation. However, it is important to understand that a group can only transform themselves. They cannot transform others.

Cooperative inquiry is able to function as a starting place for the development of a community spirit of cooperation and social transformation towards the deepening of democracy. Giving consideration to the pillar of sustainability, cooperative inquiry in this community school context functioned as the organising catalyst for a culture of learning towards social regeneration within the group of people who intentionally practised it. Reflecting on the Forest School research through this lens, I contend that the Forest School culture functioned like a loose cooperative inquiry, underpinned by learning towards deep democracy.
In the summary of the previous chapter I suggested some attributes required for relational learning for democracy through the political pillar of sustainability, which include attention to procedures, processes, structures and interpersonal relationships, together with particular habits of action, mind and spirit. I put these forward as scaffolding towards the crafting of a culturally sustaining life. The work in this chapter supports these. I emphasise the potential of synergy as participatory consciousness for real dialogical participation. I claim that regular conscious attention to, and decision-making about, the enactment of hierarchical power in relationships is an important habit of mind and action. The unconscious assumption of hierarchy, which can manifest as competition and other forms of adversarial communication, is not normally conducive to full-bodied participation in communication without a platform of cooperation.

To this point in the dissertation, my major consideration has been socio-political, being cooperative learning towards socio-cultural sustainability. It has not included the ecological however, which is significant to the EfS project. In the following, I shall explore the personal and the ecological more closely. I wanted to know if cooperative inquiry worked as effectively for socio-ecological transformation.
CHAPTER EIGHT – TOWARDS AN ECOLOGICAL SELF THROUGH A RETURN TO COMMUNITY

In this chapter, I investigate the self. I look for an orientation towards continual reconnecting - of all aspects of our own lives and particularly of people with nature, through the vehicle of a school community, in order to provide a wholesome, sustainable ecological community in which children can learn for a sustainable future. The people and nature (ecological sustainability) curriculum focus of environmental education includes studies and practices oriented towards living lightly on the earth (for example, Fien, 1997). Schools as learning communities have the structural capacity to focus on the ecological development of their communities in the context of their bioregions. In the previous chapters, processes and stances conducive to cooperative human relationships and a vibrant community spirit for schools as learning communities were explored. It was noted in the previous chapter that individuals choose or reject cooperation (rather than hierarchical processes) in relationships, which has consequences in the quality of the community. It is a choice to maintain the 'learner' orientation described in chapters four and five, which I suggest is required for community transformation towards sustainability.

In section one of this chapter, I problematise the egoistical notion of the self, which is oriented towards consumerism, gluttony, avarice and desire, all of which contribute towards ecological and social destruction and which act against the 're-connecting' impulse of the ecological self. In section two, I present two small research reports. One is reflective practice research into the development of my own ecological self. The other is a small cooperative inquiry project, which was implemented at Forest School one year after the previous Forest School research and several months after the conclusion of the Riverdale. In section three I draw the research strands together and suggest that the processes of reflective practice and cooperative inquiry are themselves transformative, at least where this is the intention.

All radical ecology positions consider individual human-more than human relationships to be a vital concern, but deep ecology is greatly concerned with this subject and has

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99 A simple understanding of the ecological self is that of the 'reconnecting self'. I provide a much deeper understanding of the ecological self, through a variety of perspectives, in section 7.2 of Appendix Seven.
developed the notion of the ecological self in considerable detail. The ecological self has been the subject of significant debate, and in some form a notion of the ecological self is now accepted by all radical ecology positions. The EfS literature does not generally reflect this acknowledgment, however. This is at least partly because the Earth Education group, who are informed by deep ecology, marginalise themselves and refuse to engage with or learn from other environmental education interests, claiming to have the one true solution to the problems of education while other environmental education interests are simply agencies of the economy (Van Matre, 2001). Earth Education has much to learn from the socially critical approach of other environmental educators and similarly, the notion of the ecological self has much to offer the field of environmental education. I hope that in the future, environmental educators will explicitly include the notion of the ecological self in their programs. This chapter is a contribution towards this objective.

For ease of reading, I shall provide only a general view of the self here. For further detail, I have placed five differing views on the self as Appendix Seven. The 'self' is defined in Delbridge et al. (1982, 1561) as, "a person or thing referred to with respect to individuality; one's own person: one's own self" (italics given). This meaning, underpinned by differentiation, refers to standard usage. The Oxford companion to philosophy defines the self as: "a subject of consciousness, a being capable of thought and experience and able to engage in deliberative action. ... [It] must have a capacity for self-consciousness" (Honderich, 1995, 816-7; italics given). According to Honderich, the self must be able to entertain first-person thoughts. He says the term is sometimes used interchangeably with 'person' but with a greater emphasis on the inner dimension of personality than the bodily form. The history of views on the self is long and varies from an emphasis on the mind, through varying emphases on being, existence, behaviour, rules and process to an emphasis on relationship.

Honderich points out that metaphysicians see two broad categories of definitions of the self, being those which are substantival (that is, the self is a substance) and those which

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100 This elitist, hierarchical attitude is problematic. As radical ecologists, one of our tenets is to overturn the axial organising principles of modern societies (Taylor, 1995, 540 and Zimmerman, 1994, 3). Ecofeminists show that one of these organising principles is patriarchal, hierarchical practices. Referring to the deep ecology/ecofeminist debate, leading deep ecologist Bill Devall, said: “We need each other…” (1990, 57). It is likely that Earth Educators would not claim any loyalty to radical ecology as a union of ecophilosophical positions. However, I suggest that whilst they maintain their arrogance, they cannot claim that they practice adherence to deep ecology either. This is because symbiosis and mutual interrelationships as well as collective
are non-substantival (that is, the self is a bundle of perceptions, or modes) (1995, 817). Descartes, whose famous Cogito\textsuperscript{101} argument known as the 'ghost in the machine' view, is credited with being responsible for Cartesian dualism, a belief that the mind/soul is distinct from, and superior to the body (Honderich, 1995, 190-1). Below I shall present some difficulties that are attributed to problematic interpretations of the notion of the self.

8.1 The Problem of Egoistical Relationships

Chapter six presented arguments that a culture of possessive, self-interested individualism contributes in a significant way to an atomistic, mechanistic culture of consumption, personal alienation and environmental degradation. This section will explore self-interest more deeply. Slaughter (1992, 117) writes that we are entrained in "short term, ego-bound thinking" in our daily lives and habits and take into account only the restricted requirements of the present. He writes that elements including advertising, materialism, consumerism, competitive individualism and the pursuit of economic growth are contradictions that need to be resolved before transformation to ecological sustainability can be achieved. This means that these elements support the ego-bound thinking in which we are entrained.

Heron (1996) would suggest that the condition of being \textit{entrained} in ego-bound thinking is one of being locked in a linguistic, conceptual world of secondary meaning which has become dislocated from the world of primary meaning. I would take Heron's account further and suggest that the world of secondary meaning is dualistically hyper-separated from the world of primary meaning, which is backgrounded and excluded, while the secondary meaning is fore-grounded and privileged. Heron says:

\begin{quote}
Conceptual systems do a disservice when they separate subject and object, objectify perceptual images in terms of restrictive definitions, categorize lived experience in limiting reductionist terms, then repress the depth of primary meaning and erect an alienated model of a world on this repression. (1996, 181)
\end{quote}

Abram elaborates upon this idea:

\begin{quote}
responsibility are two of the person-planet paradigm characteristics which underpin deep ecology (Drengson and Inoue 1995, 96), to which Earth Educators claim to subscribe.\footnote{I am thinking, therefore I exist.}
\end{quote}
The apparently autonomous, mental dimension originally opened by the alphabet - the ability to interact with our own signs in utter abstraction from our earthly surroundings - has today blossomed into a vast, cognitive realm, a horizonless expanse of virtual interactions and encounters. Our reflective intellects inhabit a global field of information, pondering the latest scenario for the origin of the universe as we absently fork food into our mouths, composing presentations for the next board meeting while we sip our coffee or cappuccino, clicking on the computer and slipping into cyberspace in order to network with other bodiless minds,… (1996, 265)

To this point I have suggested that ego-bound thinking is situated within the conceptual, linguistic domain, unquestioned and habituated while the perceiving body is in absentia. This means that ego-bound thinking exists in privileged hyper-separation from the perceiving body.

Use of the term 'ego' is multi-perspectival. In the Macquarie Dictionary, Delbridge et al. give the standard meaning of 'ego' as:

The 'I' or self of any person; a person as thinking, feeling, and willing, and distinguishing itself from the selves of others and from objects of its thought. (1982)

The standard meaning of 'ego' equates to that of 'self'. An egoist according to Delbridge et al., is "a self-centred or selfish person". Daniels and Horowitz (1984, 32) explain that terms such as 'big ego' or 'egoistical', which are taken to refer to the person who thinks him or herself better or more important than others, are pop usages of the term 'ego'. Delbridge et al. (1982) distinguish the standard usage of the term 'ego' from the psychoanalytic meaning. The psychoanalytic meaning is that part of the psychic apparatus, which encounters and responds to the exterior world, thus reconciling the primordial impulses of the id with the requirements of the social and physical context. Freud has described the ego as the internal executive that directs which parts of us expresses himself or herself, as well as how and when (Daniels and Horowitz, 1984, 32).

Freud uses the term 'ego' together with 'id' and superego. 'Id' is that part of ourselves that responds to thirst, hunger, sexuality and aggression. Superego, the conscience, is comprised of guidelines and rules internalised from our parents and authority figures as well as the ideals about the kind of person we would wish to become (Daniels and Horowitz, 1984, 32). The ego, id and superego are only partly conscious. Adler extended upon the standard meaning of ego and sees individuals as drops of water, each
one conceited (Daniels and Horowitz, 1984, 32). He describes the infantile ego and the image-based ego. The infantile ego asks, "am I getting enough?" to which a 'no' response leads to the answer: "me, me, me". The image-based ego comprises self-glorification, which is advising others and wanting them to advise me how marvellous I am. Self-deprecation advises myself how valueless I am and imagines that others see me like that as well. Daniels and Horowitz (1984, 33) explain that learning to take care of one's own emotional needs enables self-valuing as one is, therefore feeling less need to win, to be more important or put others down. This involves becoming conscious of acting to strengthen one's image-based ego or infantile ego at the time it is occurring in order to choose to act differently. This means learning to become conscious of one's thoughts so that one can choose different behaviours. In critique, Capra (1983, 192-193) points out that Freudian psychology originates from a rationalist, mechanistic, quantitative approach to physics, which did not account for the existence of mystical or spiritual experiences.

8.1.1 Egoism as Underdevelopment of the Self

Using Wilber's works a charge of egoism is a charge of personal underdevelopment whilst acting in the world informed by an indulgence in infantile ego and image-based ego. Wilber (1996, 113) claims that collectively, humanity has evolved only to the ego level. Wilber (ibid. 199) describes three general realms of being and knowing which can be stated in a variety of different ways, including the sensory, the mental and the spiritual or the prepersonal, the personal and the transpersonal. He describes the 'self' as the climber of the ladder of consciousness\textsuperscript{102}, the locus of appropriation (1996, 275). The climber takes the rung with him/her so that the structures from the substrates continue to fulfil their own functions as well as helping or being constituents of the higher structures. It is important to see the centrality of taking the rungs up the ladder as one climbs it, otherwise the trap of the spirit/matter dualism appears which foregrounds spirit while backgrounding and excluding the body.

\textsuperscript{102} The contradiction between the two uses of the ladder image – Jacob’s ladder as metaphor for business-as-usual in which high is good but problematised in this thesis, and Wilber’s ladder of consciousness in which high is good but not problematised in this thesis - suggests a postmodern paradox which is inherent in some aspects of radical ecology. The paradox is the paradigm’s own incorporation of business-as-usual foundations. With this understanding, to achieve the purpose for this chapter I shall continue its use. It is another project to deconstruct and reinterpret Wilber’s work, which would make little change to the outcome of this chapter in any case. In defence of the use of Wilber’s work, the penultimate recognition is the image’s deconstruction, in that the ground of all being is also the highest state of being so the image is grounded. Or, the highest rung in the ladder of consciousness includes the wood out of which the ladder is made (Wilber, 1996, 289).
Wilber (1996, 217, 284) describes his version of the bodymind level as an integrating of mind and body into a "higher-order wholeness of bodymind union" or the centaur. This corresponds to his vision-logic stage, which he describes as the uppermost integrative stage in the personal realm. The emphasis in the vision-logic stage is on integrating the previously developed structures, to be able to envision the network of higher and creative relationships and propositions. The following stages are fully integrative and transcendental until the final complete awareness of the ultimate is reached. Heron's work highlights the third realm, the postconceptual realm, as one of a continual dialectic between the first and second realms, the preconceptual and the conceptual, to celebrate and elaborate primary meaning so that the concepts are "continually self-transcending" (1996, 183).

Heron's postconceptual realm would definitely enable the development of Maslow's actualisation of the self and Wilber's actualisation of higher consciousness. I expanded upon these notions of the self and consciousness to illustrate the incompleteness, the lack of actualisation of an egoistical or self-centred self, which lacks the ability to reach expansively outside of itself or to transcend itself. Using Heron (1996), Slaughter (1992) and Wilber (1996), an egocentric self might be trained into the conceptual stages by media and the cultural apparatus of the economy or might be regressing to an infantile or image-based ego or other regressive stages. The essential point is that it is an incomplete development of a human being.

8.1.2 Egoism as Underdevelopment of Society

Capra (1983, 406) comments that the Cartesian mind/matter split together with the separation of individuals from their environment appears to be a collective mental illness shared by the "Western culture", and it is perceived as a mental illness by other cultures. Plumwood (1993, 143-154) still has the most thoroughgoing critique of egoism that I have read. She explains that egoism arises from a problematic notion of the self, which is seen as a self/other dualism. According to Plumwood, egoism is the dominant rational mode of being in the public sphere. This is the notion of the self which backgrounds and hyper-separates women, instrumentalises nature and colonises and enslaves human 'other' through the 'isms' of domination. Where the dominant mode of

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103 A chart which summarises Wilber's stages of consciousness is included as Appendix Seven.
thinking and being is through the apparatus of a rational market, altruism is seen as irrational and a quality saved for women in the private sphere. The self/other dualism, as manifestation of egoism, weaves the deep configuration of mastery into a tousled mesh of exclusions and inclusions between self and other. Plumwood explains that this egoist self, which treats the ‘other’ as alien, is not at all constrained empathically or morally by the other's needs because of its hyper-separation. The egoist self simply does not see the other as having any intrinsic value. Rather the 'other' is seen as either a resource or hindrance to one's own needs. In this way it instrumentalises all others. Plumwood writes that this instrumental model of nature and women as 'other' is so deeply entrenched that most people, including many conservationists, simply work within the worldview.

Plumwood (1993, 154) suggests that mutuality and relationality are necessary conditions for a more adequate view of the self and its embedment in social and ecological communities. Wilber (1996), Heron (1996), Fox (1990) and others would suggest that attention to the actualising and spiritual growth of the self and consciousness are also necessary conditions for a more autonomous view of the self which would not consume nature and others through gluttony, avarice or greed. According to both Heron (1996) and Abram (1996) another antidote to an egocentric, mentally entrained, conceptually imprisoned worldview, would be to re-inhabit the world of primary experience. Heron suggests that this be in a postconceptual manner in which there is continuous interplay between the primary and secondary realms to reveal and deepen our appreciation of our primary experience. Abram would emphasise the carnal, experiencing, pulsating senses of the body, to deeply participate in the perception of the world. I suggest that in order to reach the actualisation of the self and consciousness described by Wilber, Maslow and others, incorporation of Abram's and Heron's work provides a more complete approach.

For the purpose of illumining EfS, we need the re-inhabiting of the world of primary meaning together with a dialectal, postconceptual process to deepen and reveal our appreciation of this world. We also need the actualising and spiritual growth of the self and consciousness. As individuals we might not be able to prevent the advertisers from advertising, or prevent the economists and corporations from acting on policies of economic growth. However we can commit ourselves to fully perceiving the world and
each other, in full, embodied, fleshful ways to reveal our deep consciousness of interconnectedness and transcendence: to live lightly on the earth. In the next section I shall briefly make clear the planetary consequences of egoism, before elucidating conceptions of the ecological self.

8.1.3 Egoism as Unsustainable Development of the Planet

According to Joanna Macy, the planetary crises, whether ecological, military or social, arise from a "dysfunctional and pathological notion of the self" (1993, 187). Albert LaChance claims that western society, individually and collectively, is addicted to consumerism as part of a deep pathology. He introduces his book "Greenspirit" in this way:

There is only one problem: everything! ... Industrial culture has a bad chemical dependency problem. Internally, within our own bodies, we call it the drug and alcohol epidemic. Externally, outside our bodies, it's the pollution problem - the two faces of one problem, a toxic human on a toxic planet. (LaChance, 1991, 1)

A quarter of a century ago, Schumacher wrote:

The modern economy is propelled by a frenzy of greed and indulges in an orgy of envy, and these are not accidental features but the very cause of its expansionist success... A man driven by greed or envy loses the power of seeing things as they really are, of seeing things in their roundness and wholeness, and his very successes become failures. If whole societies become infected by these vices, they may indeed achieve astonishing things but they become increasingly incapable of solving the most elementary problems of everyday existence... (1974, 29 - 31; italics added)

Today, the most elementary problems of everyday existence cannot be solved. Water and air pollution are two such elementary problems. The solution seems absolutely simple - stop emitting the pollution! If we immediately stopped pouring wastes into the air and water it would be only days before the healing capacity of nature returned the air and flowing waters to health. However while the addiction to consumption continues, driving the lowest possible cost machinery of the economy, these problems remain insoluble. Schumacher would suggest that this is associated with the frenzy of greed and envy.

Schumacher writes: "The cultivation and expansion of needs is the antithesis of wisdom" (1974, 31). M. Fox would agree, seeing wisdom as being attained through
generosity in person and spirit. He equates generosity with spiritual development. Additionally Schumacher proposes that the fostering and broadening of needs is also the direct opposite of peace and freedom (1974, 29 - 31). This is supported by Ogilvy (1992, 149) who comments that even though we have the achievements of science, there never seems to be sufficient. There never seems to be sufficient love, sufficient attention, sufficient respect or sufficient dignity. Therefore we make excessive amounts of the items we know how to make such as war, toxic wastes and inappropriate television.

W. Fox (1995b, 249) writes about the problems with personal identification as personal commonality. Personal identification is associated with my pets, my friends, my football club and other aspects with which we identify, such that an assault on their integrity is also an assault on our personal integrity (1995b, 249). He asserts that primary reliance upon this form of identification is costing the earth because personal identifications:

underlie the egoisms, attachments, and exclusivities that find personal, corporate, national, and international expression in possessiveness, greed, exploitation, war, and ecocide. (Fox, 1995b, 267)

Singer (1995, 26) comments that America stands as a beacon to announce where a society based on individual self interest is heading. Singer writes, "Greed at the top is one side of the society that appears to be losing any sense of a common good" (1995, 32). He writes of the homeless people who are neighbours to the President in the White House and who sleep on pieces of cardboard over the grating of a subway to keep themselves warm.

George (1995, 22) expresses the opinion that the planetary crisis is evidence of our distance from ecology. He says this is caused by egoism, or extreme self-centredness. He puts forward the view that in a higher part of our minds, help is always available with the acceptance of our personal and collective responsibility for planetary healing, however we do not acknowledge it. He says:

The whole trouble is, I am absent, not available, not connected, not here now. At my level of attention or self-awareness, nothing of the higher energy can pierce the armor of my self-centredness. I am too full of myself for it to enter. (1995, 22, italics given)

George believes that a critical mass of people will need to open to the higher forces before the dysfunctions of the planet may begin to be healed. In his view letting go of
egoism is hard, long work yet the future of human life and maybe all life on the planet is dependent upon this inner personal work taking place. George (1995, 23) comments that we urgently need to awaken and he writes, "So, where can change begin, if not with me? And when, if not now? These questions are not rhetorical. They are real alarm bells."

On 25/9/01, my fourteen year old son and I watched the evening ABC news together. The news was not much different to that of the previous evenings - the same range of topics. We watched a report on the impending war against terrorism, a report on decreasing populations of migrating birds in desperate need of habitat conservation and renewal and a report alluding to global climate change and our shortage of rain this winter in Western Australia. My son commented on how bad the world is and that he doesn't expect to live to be a man. He wondered if we could go to live in the desert because it might be safer there since it would probably be large concentrations of population who are attacked or who might attack each other. I reminded him of the multitude of social activism activities of our friends, of how we had collectively made progress by largely stopping old growth forest logging and of the environmental activities of state and federal governments. I tried to give him hope because it is tremendously important that children believe that there will be a sane future in which they might blossom.

The following morning I woke up at 1.45AM, following a nightmare that I could not recall but I could not gain a sense of reality. I walked around but felt the darkness touching my skin. I sat to read but could not. I was simply overwhelmed by a sense of rising insanity. I was overwhelmed because of my connection to a global insanity and my concern for children and the future. Subsequent discussions about my experience reveal a common, shared, deep concern. Parents are worried about their children's future and children are despairing about the world in which they find themselves. Others are considering building underground houses in the desert or living wild in the forests where they will not be attacked by roving hoards of starving refugees from the city. And we live in the south west of Western Australia where we must, in reality, be reasonably safe from these possibilities. Perhaps humanity can feel the darkening collective unconscious. The following sections document a search for a sane personal response to a maddening world. It addresses the question: what can one school teacher do?
8.2 Enhancing The Ecological Self

The ecological self is the reconnecting self. The notion of the ecological self in education points to potential for transformation due to the ecological self's love of nature and joy in its preservation. Developing a practical knowledge of the ecological self is a sane personal response to a maddening world and is an oppositional practice\textsuperscript{104}. There are a multitude of perspectives on the ecological self. Five different perspectives on the ecological self are ecofeminist philosophy, transpersonal ecology, deep ecology, spiritual ecology and spiritual ecofeminism. For detail on these perspectives, please see section 7.2 of Appendix Seven for a description of each. As described above a more adequate view of the self (than the egoistic notion) is one underpinned by a postconceptual re-inhabiting of the sensing, perceiving body to heighten self-actualisation and consciousness of transcendence.

The ecological self is a deceptively simple concept yet one with far reaching implications for the planet. Notions of the ecological self vary in similar ways to the different perspectives on the self given in Appendix Seven, however they all interconnect the self to the ecosphere in some way - generally by expansion of soul or self, or by relation. Chapter seven of this dissertation explored the notion of synergy in a collaborative group. The previous sections of this chapter show how Abram's work on participation with nature through re-inhabiting the perceiving, sensory body enlightens Wilber's actualisation of the spiritual, transcendent, transpersonal self through the actualising consciousness up-hierarchy. This is because perception is part of Wilber's first realm and the ground of all subsequent stages, which integrate and expand upon the previous stages. This recognition illustrates the view that the human or nature first argument (for planetary action) is irrelevant. The important aspect is the attitude of 'embodied compassion outwards'. This sometimes results in the phenomenon of synergy in the sense of the communion with people or the communion with nature, which can be a profoundly transformative experience.

Freya Mathews' treatise on the ecological self is an inspiring, beautifully crafted piece of philosophy. Mathews writes:

\textsuperscript{104} I use the term 'oppositional practice' to mean a practice which functions to oppose the logic of business-as-usual.
As self-conscious beings our conatus\(^{105}\) has psychological as well as physical and behavioural dimensions. We experience the conatus psychologically as self-love, as an intense emotional investment in everything that we see as falling within the circle of our being. When this self-love is expanded - by our awareness of our unity with Nature - to encompass the wider systems of Nature, then we experience the kind of joy in existence to which Spinoza was pointing. (1994, 158)

Mathews has a substantival, encompassing, ecological view of the self. I see her concept as one that enables synergy in the sense that synergy facilitates the development of a new and different creation, which was greater than the sum of its parts. This means that through the continuing present moment of connection, the network of higher relationships can be progressively revealed to the 'seer' of one's ecological self. Her view would be acceptable to all positions on the ecological self.

The ecological self is that aspect of ourselves which perceives and experiences the sense of wonder and joy in nature\(^{106}\). A notion of the ecological self is a central tenet in deep ecology and transpersonal ecology, is accepted on condition of clarification by ecofeminist philosophers and depending upon definition is fundamental to the work of spiritual ecologists. As described in chapter two, there are a plethora of different views on the various tenets held by radical ecology. With a notion such as the ecological self there is perhaps as much variation within each cluster of positions as there is across the spectrum. For example there may be a greater variation within ecofeminism, between the spiritual ecofeminists and some ecofeminist philosophers, than between ecofeminism and deep ecology. Conversely there may be more similarity in view between spiritual ecofeminists and some deep ecologists than within ecofeminism. As observed by both Mathews (1994b) and Plumwood (1994, 102), because of the magnitude of the disagreements between several of the categories and positions there is no possibility of simply cutting and pasting the various views on the various themes to achieve a satisfactory composite collage. However I agree with Mathews in that a kind of tria- or dialectal reconciliation can be reached. The appended section is a contribution towards this end. The method I have used to achieve the reconciliation takes the holistic rather than the discrete level of meaning as the starting place. It uses Peile's (1994, 230) method of establishing and holding the difference in order to reach synthesis. This

\(^{105}\) Delbridge et al. (1982) define conatus as, "an effort or striving." In the present context, I understand conatus to mean an organism's striving towards self-actualisation.

\(^{106}\) Where 'nature' is the nature in and of ourselves, the nature in and of others, the nature in which humans are enmeshed, and the nature of the wild. Unless otherwise specified, the meaning of the term 'nature' in this research project is as presented here.
method is commensurate with the processual orientation of radical ecology that highlights tenets such as the valuing of diversity and difference and the demonstrating of cooperation and participation based upon respectful dialogue.

Barns (1997, 41) and Mathews (1996) write about the relational self. Individual selves linked by interconnected processes, practices, institutions and signs constitute society. It is proposed by many writers (Singer, 1995, Fox, 2000, Daniels and Horowitz, 1984) that the self-interested, disconnected, isolated and alienated lives of loneliness led by many people of the business-as-usual orientation is a symptom of a seriously ailing consumerist society. Bowles and Gintis (1986) use an implicit communitarian understanding of the self, which is constituted within and sustained by community. In the communitarian sense we are "persons-in-community" (Barns, 1997, 30). As discussed in chapter six the relational self is a learner, a mutually respectful person-in-community. Freya Mathews (1994a, 146) sees the self as a process. In her words, "...self is a process, involving an unfolding, a becoming, in time". Therefore the relational self is the ecological self. Barns (1997, 41) questions the assumption that the relational self is an ecological self, illuminating the point that one basis for the philosophical elaboration of the ecological self is new science which emphasises interconnectedness and which may not yet have fully explored the implications of enlightenment reason.

Further he questions Eckersley's suggestion that the larger framework of ecocentrism ultimately provides the nurturing environment for the relational or socialist self. He asserts instead that the reverse may be true which is, "the development of an ecological self is a possible (and certainly desirable) outcome of a process of self development that should be understood in communitarian terms" (1997, 41). In other words Barns believes that a relational self is potentially (but not necessarily) an ecological self. For me, the important point is the potential of the relational self to be ecological and vice versa. The definition of the ecological self arrived at through synthesis of the various radical ecology positions includes both the relational and the ecological. Ecofeminism could not accept a definition of the ecological self which was not relational. The remainder of this dissertation assumes an ecological self to be a relational self and vice versa (at least potentially).
8.2.1 The Significance of the Self in Transformation

Learning communities can learn to function as radical ecological communities through the relationality and interconnectedness of the ecological self, in reconnecting to nature and people. Capra writes:

Reconnecting with the web of life means building and nurturing sustainable communities in which we can satisfy our needs and aspirations without diminishing the chances of future generations… [W]e need to learn the basic principles of ecology. We need to become, as it were, ecologically literate. (1997, 289)

There are many approaches to ecological literacy. Fox (2000, 331) writes about the human yearning for deep collaboration. I suggest that this means deep collaboration with people as well as nature, as beautifully described by Moore who writes that humans constantly desire and need ecology as "homecoming" (1994, 136 - 137). The development of an ecological self is an oppositional practice to the narrow, egoistical view of self, which underpins the consumerist, narcissistic business-as-usual culture that is devouring the planet. In the orientation towards business-as-usual, ego-bound, conceptual thinking is fore-grounded while the experience of the body is backgrounded and hyper-separated. Using Wilber's (1996) work egoism is the underdevelopment of self or consciousness, which characterises the majority of westerners. I propose that a more adequate view of the self is one underpinned by mutuality, relationality and the actualising and spiritual growth of self and consciousness, through a re-inhabiting of the body via the postconceptual experience of primary meaning.

Other ways of describing the ecological self are as embodied compassion focused outward, enabling the full development of the self. I believe this phenomenon is similar to unconditional personal responsibility, which was reported with the Forest School research, and similar to Mathews' notion of world-directed love which she claims is the vital attitude in the ecological self in its task of reconnecting. Bohm’s participatory consciousness (2000, 26 – 27), described in the previous chapter, explains aspects of the ecological self as well. The synergistic potential of the ecological self shows the 'human or nature first?' argument to be a non-sense. It is the incorporation of the experience itself, which is transformative.
Plumwood's contribution to the definition of the ecological self is the relational identity based on a particularistic association with the nature of place and practices of care through which commitment to people and places is expressed. This is very similar in effect to Moore's notion of coming home. In summary the ecological self embodies the attitude and practice of out-reaching world-directed love on the basis of deep relationship, connection and mutuality. It encompasses a felt deep sense of interconnectedness with the cycle of life on the basis of creativity, care and compassion, expansiveness of soul and respect for other on the basis of respect for difference. It comprises the felt soul connectedness with home as people and place and a postconceptual re-inhabiting of the body. Extrapolating from the literature, an ecological self is also a relational self, which develops in the communitarian, radical democratic sense of community. Significantly we all have an ecological self which can be repressed by ego-bound thinking. As I see it, the task of school communities is to develop the ecological selves to engage the community in ecologically restorative and fulfilling reconnecting activities. This is a radically oppositional practice against the business-as-usual egoistic society and is a practice of Sarah's circle in that it is earth-oriented, democratic, nurturing, sensual and emphasises interdependence.

**Action Research for Transformation to The Ecological Self**

In this section I report two small research projects into the ecological self, one being my own reflective practice on transformation and the other being a cooperative inquiry project implemented at Forest School approximately one year after the ethnographic research with Forest School. Both projects were successful for my project of understanding the potential of the ecological self. Both research methods were successful in the orientation towards the ecological self's work of reconnecting. Reflective practice facilitates work in the postconceptual field, the field in which a dialectal interplay between the primary, preconceptual field and the secondary, linguistic field takes place (Heron, 1996, 184). For the collaborative project cooperative inquiry is used, firstly because of its capacity for personal transformation, as clearly documented in the previous chapter. Secondly, it is used because many writers attest to the human yearning for deep collaboration (for example, Fox, 2000, 331, Scott Peck, 1987, Forster, 1995, Moore, 1994). It seemed that a collaborative process might be more helpful for busy people than an individual project which can very easily be
jettisoned in times of personal stress which teachers face with regularity. Finally, I wanted to determine the suitability of the cooperative inquiry process for the purpose of transformation of the ecological self.

### 8.2.2 The Task of Enhancing the Ecological Self: A Reflective Practice

A reflective practice journal was kept during most of this PhD research to help with the postconceptual development of my practical knowledge about transformation in terms of community, interpersonal relationships and self. Journaling holds a topic still while it is being investigated. It records the 'flow' of intentions, actions and reflections for current or later use and formalises and structures a personal process so that it is intentional and systematic. Reflective practice is a simple action research technique which does not emphasise the data production or analysis. Rather it emphasises the reflection, planning and engaging phases of a continuous four phase process of Plan ➔ Act ➔ Describe ➔ Reflect ➔ Plan ➔ Act ➔ Describe and so on (Tripp, 1996, 1, 14). Because I take many roles in life, some permanent and some temporary (for example, mother, researcher, lecturer, teacher, project co-ordinator, chairperson and student consultant), I needed a process to hold them all in concert so that I could recognise, develop and transfer my learning. Most significantly I wanted this dissertation to be more than an academic project to produce new intellectual knowledge and satisfy the requirements of a higher degree. I also wanted to develop, extend and consolidate my practical knowledge, that is, I wanted to transform myself and I particularly wanted to make a practical contribution towards radical ecological change. Therefore the reflective practice project was as much to develop a practical contribution towards social change as it was for the postconceptual development of the dissertation. These were both mutually informative.

The process facilitated the forming and clarifying of my ideas and the testing and development of notions such as Heron's postconceptual thought. It enabled dialogue with myself over days, weeks and years to fully investigate and critique an idea before and while discussing it with others. Along with cooperative inquiry, the process is also therapeutic. Being part of a community while the community is functional and community spirit is high is a beautiful human experience, as is documented in chapters six and seven. However being part of a community in chaos or spiralling into chaos can
be difficult and disparaging. It might be even more stressful when the increasingly negative experience is intended to underwrite a PhD! The journal was very useful in converting feelings of anger, sadness and occasional despair and emptiness resulting from the primary experience, through the conceptual stages (and reconceptual stages) to the insightful postconceptual practical knowledge that I required. Overall the journal was necessary to inform and 'act through' a PhD which intended to seed, grow, nurture and record a multi-arena gesture of transformation towards sustainability. For example the following vignette records dialogue around the initial quandary about propositional or practical knowledge:

I have had many insightful moments lately, and many epiphanies. I feel that I now have a much greater understanding and empathy with the first interviews for this research, being from Forest School. I have now been through the gestation, birth and first weeks in the life of a school community. I have many insights and some experience, and therefore a new, different type of knowledge. I frequently feel that I am spending too much time on the workings and day to day machinations of the [Riverdale] school, to the exclusion of the research, only to realise that I am participating in the research by participating in the school experiences and journaling. I then feel permitted to continue to involve myself deeply in the school. As I do, insights keep appearing, and I feel that this is a much more meaningful way of researching. My life, my growth, my personal transformation towards a greater ecological contribution, and my Ph.D, are one and the same. (Journal, March, 1996)

As a result of these self-dialogues I obtained Reason's and Heron's work and committed myself to the development of practical knowledge about each aspect of the dissertation. Heron describes practical knowledge, knowing how, (1996, 34) as the consummation of the knowledge quest: its fulfilment. Of Heron's four forms of knowing which are experiential, presentational, propositional and practical, the practical has the primacy. This is because practical knowledge is grounded in the three prior forms of knowing. Heron says:

To say that practice consummates the prior forms of knowing on which it is grounded, is to say that it takes the knowledge quest beyond justification, beyond the concern for validity and truth-values, into the celebration of being-values, by showing them forth. It affirms what is intrinsically worthwhile, human flourishing, by manifesting it in action. (1996, 34)
Many experiences with the ecological self were recorded, enabling many cycles of analysis, reflection and intentional actions, to formulate the research to document a personal and a collaborative process of transformation. I noticed that by constantly paying careful attention and heeding my own feelings and responses I could observe critical phenomena that clarified a problem. For example:

...We decided to stay [at the beach] and swim and wait for the dolphins, which, after a wait of an hour and a half, came in for five minutes. The children played exceedingly cooperatively, being very considerate and caring to each other. It was exhilarating being present with the children and watching their reactions to the dolphins - as objects of great love, admiration and respect. Their joy, even after such a short encounter, was palpable. (Journal, March, 1996)

Carson (1996) refers to children's sense of wonder. Thomas Berry speaks of communion in which a reality is intimately present to another reality, finding fulfilment in mutual presence. It is accompanied by awe and reverence, a deep awareness of sacred presence (1990, 106, 45, 189). The children-dolphin observation was significant for this research not because it was novel, because I had observed many such occasions before, but because I had documented it and made it conceptual knowledge so that I could reflect and build upon the experience in a postconceptual way.

On another occasion, a school day, eighteen ten to thirteen year old children and I went to the dolphin beach on a warm April morning:

The water was clear and pleasant, and the children were playing happily but apparently, a little noisily. They were about one hundred metres from the place where the dolphins regularly come in, nonetheless, a dolphin beach volunteer came to ask us to be more quiet, because tourists had arrived and he was concerned that the children's noise would cause the dolphins to stay out in the deeper water. Incredibly, shortly afterwards, two dolphins swam directly to the children, and swam right amongst them. The children were absolutely delighted, and the dolphins seemed equally happy. They allowed the children to touch them, and one seemed to follow the children for a pat. I wondered if they actually loved to hear the children's squeals of delight. They stayed for about two minutes, then left, swimming directly back out to sea. I was quite disappointed, because I worried that the dolphins might have left because the children were making too much noise, as the volunteer had warned. An amazing thing happened next. About three minutes later, the dolphins returned, again, swimming directly into the middle of the group of children. To the children's absolute glory, the dolphins had brought their babies. The dolphins seemed to be showing their babies off to the children. They
stayed in with the children for about twenty minutes. The tourists came to watch the dolphins playing with the children. Today, I learned the true meaning of 'stunningly beautiful'. (Journal, April, 1996)

I noticed that within these two pieces of writing, my writing contained such descriptors as glory, beauty, love, joy and palpable. I recognised the depth of my engagement in the watching and then the need to be more aware and more perceptive so that I could notice other such phenomena. Through the process of reflective practice around the ecological self, I intentionally developed the habit of mindfulness which is careful attention to the sensory experience of one's activity, rather than the mind/body split that seems to be 'normal', for example the absent minded eating while reading the paper. I studied Nhat Hanh's (1991) work to intentionally develop practices of mindfulness. This led to the visual and sensory perception of interconnectedness through the networked relationships of the ecological self. For example here is a record of an outing with five nine to thirteen years old children at the mangrove beach:

...And there commenced one of the most beautiful, insightful series of 'moments' of my life. We took a rough, steep path (beside much strewn rubbish) to the water's edge. The shallow edge of the water was unknown, including living crabs etc. which might present small dangers to bare feet. Led by the children, after discussion we waded across a small bay, then along the water's edge to what appeared a short crossing to the mangrove island. There were rocks along the water's edge. Jim was brave first, and swam the 2 or 3 metres to the island, which turned out to have fine white sand around the water's edge. Leaving our gear on the edge, we all followed, after a short time. After a very brief drawing of attention (by me) to the magnificent vegetation cover on the island (to which the children responded generally with a quick glance and not much interest!), the children led us around the island for about 30 metres, until one child spotted a blue manna crab. (We all had bare feet.) There followed some general consternation and fun, as children quickly jumped etc, stirring up the fine bottom and generally rendering the area cloudy and the bottom, as well as the crab, out of sight. We could not easily walk on the vegetation out of the water, as it was prickly and thick. No one was worried, as there was trust in the company of each other. We turned around, and walked back about ten metres, whereupon the children (other than Michael) decided to swim the whole way back across the bay to where we first started walking, which was a total of approximately 80-100 metres across deep water. Neither Ben nor Liam were particularly strong swimmers, however, I decided that I would not discourage them, trusting in their self-preservation instincts. Jim, aided by Janie, was gently encouraging the younger ones, telling them that he would be there should they require assistance. I hope that the image of the following 5 - 10 minutes never leaves my mind. Michael and I went back the way we had come, to collect the clothes etc., and walked
parallel to (but 20 metres away from) the children. The swimmers all walked in together, beginning to swim. Liam realised very soon that he could not stand, that it was deep water. Jim gently encouraged him to continue, that he was quite safe and was swimming well. Ben was swimming breaststroke on the outside of the group, quite steadily. Both Liam and Ben were quite obviously thrilled with, and proud of themselves, frequently yelling to demand my admiration ("look at me, Mum!"). Jim and Janie continuously and gently encouraged Ben and Liam, and were quite obviously very happy with themselves. The little procession gradually swam across the bay, each delighted with themselves and each other, and joyful in the moment. Upon reaching the other side, quite obviously full of joy and happiness, they asked me to join them in the water again. I did so, and had the most ecstatic moments in my life. We swam in the deep water as a little group around the bay in the opposite direction to that we had walked before. We swam around the coast perhaps 40 metres, passing branches and the weedy edge of the coast (choked with what I believe to be Kikuyu grass). On the other side was the beautiful vegetation of the mangrove island, and all around us the fish were jumping. The water was flat and a perfect temperature for swimming, the sun warm, and the atmosphere full of beauty and love. I could actually feel connections between everything and everyone. There was a palpable energy there that was almost visible. It was a 'beyond words' language that was intensely communicative, and deeply beautiful. We were all engaged with it, together. The scenario could have been on a remote mangrove island: the busy road only fifty metres away and the city, five hundred metres away, seemed a million miles away. The children continued, as they did for the remainder of the day, to be cooperative, caring and concerned for each others' and my well-being. The children played a little longer while I sat on the grass in the shade and watched, then we left. (Journal, April, 1996)

This time the activity is not only observed, it is my own felt experience: the multi-sensory perceptions experienced together in a rapidly overflowing field of complete, fulfilling engagement. Abram describes synaesthesia as an overlap and blending of the senses during perception which he says is usually only open to the consciousness of westerners when they suspend their impartial, analytic logic (1996, 59 - 61). The reflective experience around the concept of Abram's synaesthesia, of which I had substantial experience, was now propositional and enabled a practical linking of childhood memories with many other adult experiences of oneness with nature, spirit and people. I felt deeply reconnected to the tuarts in our bioregion and especially those in our back yard that I watched and visually nurtured every time I went outside. I deeply linked myself to my vegetable patch so that when working in my garden, I intentionally and consciously heal the planet through my deep connection. I fed the plants and the
worms around the plants daily with pulled comfrey from a continuous supply in each patch. I made very frequent reference in my journal to the garden as a way to nurture the planet and nurture one's ecological self at the same time. For me it is a Sarah's circle practice of connection, of healing self and planet.

The arena of the self and in particular the intentional development of the ecological self, deserves much more action research. I know in a practical way that it holds very much potential for personal, ecological and social transformation. A place to start this might be with experiences of the garden. Many people write, intentionally and incidentally, that the garden is the place for them to experience solace and reconnection. For example, Torbert (2001, 252) writes, "my best moment late in the day was a five minute period of pleasurably-paced pulling of weeds from our garden". My PhD colleagues\textsuperscript{107} and I unintentionally developed a code of politely inquiring about the progress of our research by actually inquiring about our gardens! We all knew and regularly discussed the fact that if our gardens were going well then our research would be as well, so the fact that the garden was going well was a green light to continue to inquire about the PhD! I am convinced about the link between contentment in the garden and a similar state in life!

When gardening I am constantly giving world-directed love and in my opinion the giving is very important. I also noticed this phenomenon with a little project with ten, eleven, twelve and thirteen year old children at Riverdale School. I was the ecology teacher and I enabled the children to start little collaborative gardens. I was most impressed with the children's attitude to the garden and each other which I had not previously seen in a school. They chose to work on their gardens at lunchtime when they had a choice of many other activities. During class they often hurried to finish their other work so that they could go and tend their plants. They were quite uninhibited in their relationship with the plants, stroking them and talking to them as if they were talking to babies. The plants seemed to respond with vigorous growth. As time progressed, the children brought along stumps to make beautiful little sitting places so that they could fully enjoy their gardens. Forest School participants reported a similar phenomenon, although their project had been on-going for years and the gardens were quite cyclical in the intensity of the children's interest.

\textsuperscript{107} We were all engaged in some way in the broad field of environmental ethics, which most likely explains the phenomenon, nonetheless, it is still worth further investigation.
Once I had become conscious of these ecological self-experiences and brought them to conceptual existence, I recognised that the mindfulness itself was a key to perception. So I intentionally learned to regularly trigger my wandering mind back to the perceptual present. I watch the tuart forest where I live, attentively. I notice the seasons. I watch the wattle from first bud until bloom, the fly catchers flowering, the native wisteria which follow the yellow wattle and bloom a rich purple over the yellow, the postman go to bud and flower and the various orchids appear. I watch the blue wrens, the grey fantails, the silver-eyes, the wattlebirds and the magpies with young, the cuckoo shrike, the parrots and listened with love to the rufous whistler. I watch the clouds radiate from God on the sunsets at our local beach and appreciated the smell of the seaweed. I deliberately attend to my perceiving body in my garden, at the beach and in the bush until I am present to nature everywhere. I feel I have elevated my ecological self to consciousness.

*Reflective Practice: The Research Process is the Product*

I examined the various theories of the ecological self to determine which one suited my experience. Through documenting the searching I came to ponder why I expected one theory to be more suitable than other theories. I recognised the academic trap of reducing the complexity while the field is whole. Later the cooperative inquiry group commenced and we discussed, documented and regularly revisited the notion of synergy. I became deeply aware of the parallels in the palpable, joyful experiences of communion in community as well as those of communion in nature. I had practical experience of both and intuitively recognised that the relational and the ecological are the same, for me. The synergy in community and the synaesthesia in nature are at least parallel experiences.

Some years after the completion of the cooperative inquiry research projects, as I am writing up the dissertation, I become conscious of what I came to subconsciously understand at the time, which is that the process of my reflective practice is transformational itself. The profound transformation catalyst was not the ecological self alone, although many associated epiphanies clarified and revealed the many relationships and ways of seeing that I could access. It was the process of my attention to it, the mindfulness, the conceptualising and postconceptualising of the new and different understandings of the ecological self that was transformational. My
commitment nourished the process. For me the reflective practice itself sustained the process of transformation. Further, it worked as an empowering oppositional practice. I consciously nurture and develop personal, domestic and professional practices that are actively anti-globalisation and opposed to corporate interests. On reflection, I needed to let go of separateness, of my objectivity. I needed a process to watch myself watching and to think about my seer seeing (Marshall, 2001 and Wilber, 1996) so that I could help the seer see other connections. I have always been aware of the beauty of nature but what is different now is that I am writing about it through a process of developing my knowing by which I am able to examine, appraise, critique, re-experience and cyclically revitalise my knowing. I am developing a wiser knowing.

I know that reflective practice takes discipline and dedication to be able to continuously process and record one's transformation. Schoolteachers can be reluctant to engage in on-going personal professional development activities such as these because of the countless demands and constraints upon teachers' time (Down and Hogan, 1998, 56). The following project documents a cooperative inquiry project to develop the ecological self at Forest School. Cooperative inquiry uses a similar approach to reflective practice, however its discipline is improved due to its collaborative engagement. It offers discipline and structure to the project as well as the opportunity for mutual support in a climate conducive to transformation.

8.2.3 The Task of Enhancing the Ecological Self: A Cooperative Inquiry

This section is based upon a cooperative inquiry research project conducted at Forest School. The research was conducted approximately one year after the ethnographic research with Forest School was completed and a few months after the cooperative inquiry research with Riverdale School was completed. In the ethnographic research conducted at Forest School, I showed that a school community has the potential to work as a personally and politically transformative community. The Riverdale School research supported this conclusion. Further, the Riverdale School research demonstrated that intention to bring about transformation with commitment to particular values and principles while using a process such as cooperative inquiry can bring about the transformation. In doing this, the Riverdale School group demonstrated that the research
process itself was also the goal - the group developed its model of transformation through a deliberate process of action and reflection.

I explained at the end of the previous chapter that at Riverdale School the group was successful in developing and using a holistic, participative decision-making model based upon cooperative conversation, community building, mutual support and respect, listening, and sharing. The group prepared a report making recommendations to the peak decision-making body in the school to adjust structures and processes with the intention of transforming the school decision-making to reflect particular values and principles, in fact, those which the school espoused in its policy documents. These recommendations were accepted, almost as a whole. This was the official conclusion of my research so I cannot say with any authority whether official adoption of the recommendations produced transformative results in the remainder of the community. However on the basis of my experience with the cooperative inquiry group and with the benefit of hindsight, this would not be likely without a real intention to change on an individual and collective level. The intention to change is a necessary but not sufficient condition because an individual or group might be fully intentional but not have the practical knowledge as to how to make the changes. The strength of a process such as cooperative inquiry is its cycling of action and reflection based upon experience as a foundation for presentational and propositional knowing, to develop practical know-how. On the basis of the insights and experience gained at Riverdale School, I wished to do two things. Firstly, I wanted to use the process of cooperative inquiry again, this time with teachers in a school setting and secondly, to use the process to investigate the potential for ecologically transformative action.

This section demonstrates the potential for teachers to be ecologically transformative in their interactions with their children and with each other in community. The evidence is presented in terms of propositional outcomes and is supported by practical outcomes. The inquiry is described using Heron's (1996) cooperative inquiry report guidelines in a similar format to chapter seven. However the chapter does not have the depth of description about cooperative inquiry which chapter seven does because it would be unnecessary repetition.
**Information About the Co-researchers**

I was the initiating researcher with practical knowledge of cooperative inquiry gained at Riverdale School. As detailed in the previous chapter I had attended a one-week workshop with John Heron in 1996, however for the duration of the time I undertook the Forest School cooperative inquiry, I still did not have access to Heron's (1996) publication. I believe it was finally available in Australia after the Forest School group concluded. Nonetheless I had much more confidence with the facilitation of the process on the basis of my previous experience and the workshop with John Heron. Consequently I felt more assured and therefore assertive about keeping a balance between Apollonian (rational, logical, and pre-planned) and Dionysian (emergent) elements of the inquiry. I felt keenly aware of a new ability to perceive when Dionysian emergence was directionless and most likely pointless and when it was vital to resist the Apollonian tendency to 'tidy up' and to persist with chaos.

As initiating researcher my confidence was very helpful in this externally initiated research. The group members comprised the entire school staff of teachers including the head teacher, part time teachers (other than one) and voluntary teachers. There were eight participants ranging in age from twenty-one years old (first year of teaching) to mid-forties. The school had been in existence for sixteen years, with most of the cooperative inquiry group teachers having arrived within the sixteen years. Two of the participants had been in the school for more than fifteen years as founding members and two had been in the school for eight or more years and the newest member had been at the school only one year.

**Background to the Inquiry**

In my opinion, in comparison to other primary schools, the school had a good ecology program. Each of the children had their own gardens and all of the teachers integrated ecology with their general teaching. There were a number of specialist teachers including art, drama and music, who tended to draw attention to ecological awareness and incorporate ecological observation through their media. There was a basic recycling program in place. However, considering the history of the school and its foundation in a platform of holism and planetary healing, at the time of the ethnographic research I
considered that ecology could have been a greater focus. During my ethnographic research with Forest School, some informants had commented that the school could do more in the general area of ecological awareness. When I invited the teachers to participate in this cooperative inquiry research in the broad area of enhancing the school's ecological awareness, they were very keen to participate. They saw it as a rare opportunity for professional development that they could all attend together. When I first approached the school I had a very broad ranging inquiry in mind, which I anticipated that the group would narrow down to suit its own purposes. I proposed two questions which were:

a) What is 'holistic' (or 'ecological') education? Are Forest School children being educated holistically? Could this be improved? If so, how?

b) Draw up Forest School's current ecological education model. Is this likely to produce eco-social change, now or in the future? Develop an eco-social change model. (Letter to coordinator, July, 1996)

Recruiting Group Members

Other than one part-time music teacher (who had another work commitment) all teachers agreed to participate for the duration of the inquiry. At the planning meeting, it was agreed that the group would meet a further four times, fortnightly, to be completed within term three (1996) if possible. The planning meeting was held during lunchtime on 30/7/96, to organise times and describe the method. Because of the difficulty of getting all participants together at a mutually convenient time, it was agreed to continue to meet at lunch times, with the children having an extended lunch hour. Considerable preparation was necessary for this to be implemented. The school's decision-making group needed to approve the arrangement and extra parents were requested to care for the children in the playground. The school decision-making group was happy with the arrangement and parents willingly volunteered to assist. I agreed to arrive early for each meeting to clear a space in the adult area and have the recording and other materials ready to maximise the available time. These arrangements were made during the planning meeting. The first research meeting on the 13/8/96 was the first reflection phase, which narrowed the broad topic and produced the agreed launching statement.
Details of the Time Structure and Number of Inquiry Cycles

After the planning meeting the group had four meetings of one hour each, held fortnightly except for the last meeting, which was held one month after the third meeting due to the September school holidays. The first research meeting (13/8/96) was the first reflection stage only, concluding in agreement from each person to consider the topic during the intervening time. Research meeting two (27/8/96) comprised the second action and the second reflection stages of the first cycle. Research meeting three (17/9/96) comprised one complete cycle, with stages one to four being completed. Meeting four (22/10/96) was mostly reflection, in reviewing the whole process held at Forest School. The final part of meeting four comprised discussion, suggesting recommendations to the researcher as per my original research question, for development of an ecological school community. Because the fourth meeting was held more than one month after the third meeting some of the continuity and spontaneity had been lost. Nonetheless a productive completion meeting was held.

Information About the Type of Inquiry

The inquiry was externally initiated, in that as initiating researcher I was not personally engaged with the culture. I had an insight into the culture of the school however, having implemented the ethnographic research the previous year and having maintained close contact with some of the school's participants. I could not be a full co-subject because of my externality but due to overlapping interests and practices I participated as a partial co-subject. I considered myself to have a lesser rank than the other co-subjects. Heron regards this as a "reduced warrant to contribute relevant data" in the descriptions, explanations and rationalisations in the reflection stages (1996, 41). Because of this the inquiry is regarded as a partial-form inquiry in comparison to a full-form inquiry in which everyone participates fully as both co-subject and co-researcher.

The research was an outside inquiry in that the inquiry concerned group members' personal or working lives outside of the group, rather than only the interactions inside the group. It was group based in that all of the reflective discussions occurred within the whole group, rather than breaking into smaller groups. It was a same role inquiry in that all the participants were teachers who were researching aspects of their personal development and professional practice as teachers (Heron, 1996, 42). It was an open
boundary inquiry in that the discussion usually addressed interactions between the co-
researchers and children in their classes or between the co-researchers and their
families. It was not completely open however, in that some of the inquiry centred on
participants' own personal development. Although data collection was about
participants' interactions with others, it focused on their own reactions rather than that
of the non-participants'. That is, the non-participants who interacted with the co-
researchers were not the subjects, it was the co-researchers themselves who were the
subjects. That is, there are no ethical issues raised through representation of non-present
others as the subject is the researchers' responses rather than the responses of those with
whom they are interacting.

The inquiry was reasonably balanced between Dionysian and Apollonian elements
although it may have erred towards the Apollonian. Because of the one-hour time
periods available it was necessary to facilitate with time-keeping in mind, so that
reasonable progress towards agreed goals could be made. However spontaneous related
subjects were still discussed, particularly as many tended to emerge as lead exemplars.
The group was intended to be informative rather than transformative however, upon
reflection and upon listening to the taped sessions again, in my opinion the group was
quite transformative as well. Individuals often contributed information about small
transformations they had made as a result of prehensive moments during the group
discussions or as a result of reflecting upon the meetings during the intervening period.

*External initiation and the action phases*

As initiating researcher I dealt with my lack of full participation in the action phases by
listening attentively and by asking questions where I felt that clarification was required.
Between meetings I participated fully in the life of the Riverdale School and
implemented similar investigations or practices to what the co-researchers at Forest
School had agreed to implement. This makes the research a "not quite full" form of
cooperative inquiry, according to Heron (1996, 23). I took the role of "analogous co-
subject" (Heron, 1996, 24). I occasionally contributed related stories from my Riverdale
School experience in order to assist with the articulation of a concept which the group
was processing or simply because as a group member, I was moved to contribute. I
wished to be an active participant in the group as well as the facilitator. As an analogous
co-subject the research would be described as somewhere between ethnography and cooperative inquiry, mostly cooperative inquiry but not full cooperative inquiry.

**The Inquiry Topic, the First Reflection Meeting and the Launching Focus**

During the first reflection meeting (13/8/96), the inquiry topic was broadly stated as: "How can I develop or enhance my ecological self?" The agreed launching statement was extended, to: "How can I, as a teacher/parent, with recognition to my 'ecological self', learn to trust the 'ecological self' of the child/children? (Learn to let go of control)". This same cycle was continued in week two but in week three the launching focus was modified to, "How can we use our ecological selves to consciously acknowledge the ecological selves of the children?" The continuing theme is the development of the ecological selves of the co-researchers which was addressed in the second meeting and summarised in the fourth meeting, the final reflection meeting.

During the Forest School cooperative inquiry group meetings I took notes with a pen on paper each week and brought them with me to the meetings two weeks later. During meetings three and four I recorded the discussion with a tape recorder then transcribed the tape afterwards. I took the transcription of week three, together with all the previous notes (including summaries and compiled multi-meeting overviews) to research meeting four (22/10/96). I distributed the notes and drew people's attention to aspects of them at the beginning of each subsequent meeting. Only in research meeting four did we give the notes a detailed examination and discuss the detail.

**A Summary Story - Research Cycles and the Launching Proposal**

The first research cycle took up research meetings one and two (13/8/96 and 27/8/96). The agreed launching statement for the first research cycle became specifically: "How can I, as a teacher/parent, with recognition to my 'ecological self', learn to trust the 'ecological self' of the child/children? (Learn to let go of control)". The meeting was introduced with discussion which aimed to ensure that each person had an understanding of the concept of the ecological self. Words which were used by group members to describe the concept were, feeling a 'oneness', a 'sense of release', of 'joy'. This discussion was aided by a simple dichotomous description of the business-as-usual
The launching statement was arrived at after a discussion about the problem of time, which seemed to be a huge sticking point for teachers in consideration of the children's ecological selves. This problem centred on the observation that children work at different rates which ultimately has consequences for the selves of individuals and their teacher. Teachers felt that it was detrimental to the ecological self of the child to regularly hurry them when the children wished to work slowly and carefully. A vignette from the notes illustrates part of the discussion about the problem of time:

...One child will take five seconds to arrive at point B from point A, whereas the next child may take five hours. It would be okay, (wouldn't it?) if time was not an issue at all. ([But] would it be okay to toil for hours with a blunt axe, if there was sufficient time to do that, rather than calming down, sharpening the axe, and getting the job done in a short time?) [And then there is] the issue of resentment - why should I have to do all this chopping when there are five men in this house? (Meeting notes, 13/8/96)

The launching statement was arrived at after the discussion resulted in a position that acknowledged the struggle between these two considerations:

The need for the children to 'learn their 3Rs, to keep up with their age-peers in other schools so that they will cope when they go to high school.

The need for the development of the 'whole' child - their self-esteem, their 'ecological self', their musical appreciation, their creativity, their 'love of life', etc. (The reason most people are involved with this school.) (Meeting notes, 13/8/96)

Before concluding the discussion returned to the need to keep "the atmosphere of peace, calm and trust in the child" (meeting notes, 13/8/96) of 'hearing' and simply being 'with' the other and therefore, keeping oneself centred. For the next meeting participants agreed to implement the action (experience), which was to look for and take note of things that 'trip' us, as well as times when we feel the 'oneness', while attempting to become aware of our patterns and habits. Afterwards participants generally indicated that they had really enjoyed the meeting but one participant, the very young teacher, said that she had felt very confused and unsure what the meeting was really about. I will comment further upon this remark later in the chapter.

The first inquiry cycle was continued during meeting two at the second action cycle. (The first action phase was implemented during the preceding fortnight.) The meeting

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108 This page is appended to this dissertation as Appendix Six.
began with a quick round robin to focus attention and entered a deep conversation about people's self-observations during the intervening period. Participants described their observations descriptively and with the depth that accompanies imaginative work. The descriptions were fluent and colourful. Often during the meeting, participants' voices wobbled and tears flowed as they expressed the beauty, the pain and the depth of emotion in particular encounters with children, as well as accounts of exquisiteness of nature. Interestingly notes taken during this meeting reflect the Jacob's ladder and Sarah's circle dichotomy with the 'trip ups' seeming to arise in the orientation towards Jacob's ladder and the 'oneness' seeming to arise in Sarah's circle. The list is reproduced below:

*Things that trip us:*
- Tiredness -- exhaustion
- Tying into other people's stresses
- Expecting too much
- Taking on other's responsibilities
- Not saying 'no'
- Panic compounded by focusing on inner resentment (For example: Why should I slave over a hot stove?)
- Expecting too much
*The sense of 'oneness, release':*
- Someone has helped without being asked - relaxed, calm, peaceful feeling
- Half of the family goes away, leaving the others to be together and free of the usual chaos
- Centring oneself, by consciously noticing and appreciating the detail and beauty of a tree or flower
- Self talk based on appreciation of others and where they are
- Talking with children about the location of responsibility
- Really, consciously, not taking on worries and issues - intending to and making a personal commitment to 'let go'
- Do some gardening
- Sit and study/contemplate the goings on of the creatures of the forest/bush (Meeting notes, 13/8/96)

At the conclusion of this conversation the group answered their launching statement with statements about: finding one's own personal peace first, looking for and emphasising the positive in every situation, read situations carefully, expect children to
work to their capacity and accept responsibility and 'trust and let go'. After this phase (which was the second reflection of the first cycle) had finished, a new cycle was commenced with a first reflection phase to review the launching statement.

The launching statement for week three was modified to: "Observe ourselves - use our ecological selves to observe the children and acknowledge their ecological selves - consciously. (For example. I acknowledge Jeremy's compassion for animals and all living things)." The continuing theme was the development of the ecological self of the co-researchers which was addressed in the fourth meeting and the final reflection meeting. Action on the launching statement as self-observation was carried out in the between-meeting fortnight. Research meeting three (17/9/96) was a reflection around the action of observing ourselves with our ecological selves to acknowledge the children. The session began with reflections on children's processes at the conclusion of an activity and moved to adults' conclusion processes. Again it was a reflection around all perspectives on the need for children to finish work - the consequences of pressuring to finish, together with the consequences and habits of not finishing. The topic varied from children to adults and informal life circumstances, where it was noticed that there is maturity in deciding to formally conclude a relationship or activity such as book reading because it had served its purpose or was not likely to serve its purpose. In other words sometimes a task is better concluded without completion. However children also need to learn the skills to persist with a task until it is completed and to work in an organised, regular and disciplined way. The need for balance creates difficulties for teachers around control and letting go of control of children's ecological selves.

The meeting then discussed observation of the children's ecological selves and learning from them and their innate skills, for example a child who is so connected with their gardens that they pat and stroke their plants. This led to discussion about the importance of imaginative activities for children which enabled discussion linking the ecological self of the teacher with conscious recognition of the ecological self of the children, facilitating paradigm shifting in the teacher. Points discussed were the need for teacher determination to recognise and acknowledge the divine spark in each child, to consciously and deliberately love each child and give time for that love to develop, and looking for and seeing the ecological wholeness and beauty in the children. This was set against the concept of professionalism in teaching which can be felt as cold and rule-
based. We discussed whether teachers who work for money or status as their primary motivation can really develop a strong bond with the children. The discussion revealed teacher self-transformation to be a conscious and intentional act. However the discussion accepted that when a teacher recognises other teachers to be jaded, tired and negative with children, then a professional responsibility is to skilfully let the jaded teachers know they need to encounter themselves and make some changes. The remainder of the discussion was summarised during the discussion, with the following points:

- Imagination and imaginative activities are very important in children and teachers.
- We need to commit to maintaining our own peace first, because when we have peace it is easier to see it in others.
- 'Ecological self' is easy to describe as joy, peace, coming from that feeling of oneness.
- It is a process of constant change, of letting go of control of others.
- Letting go of control of others enables you to see a situation clearly, to be yourself more fully, and not be controlled by controlling.
- You can empathise, feel, love, but you can't change anyone else's thing. All you can do is fix up your side.
- Sorrow and joy are very similar and are both beautiful. A joyful sight can bring tears, and sorrow can be felt as "a vital feeling similar to happiness" (in contrast to depression, which feels like "a dead void, going nowhere"). (Transcript, 17/9/96)
- The ecological self discussion is all about balance.
- Teachers need to recognise that all children have the spark of beauty and the resources for every occasion - it is just a matter of recognising it.
- Getting to know children better, such as when on camp, enables a different and better connection with them, a better on-going relationship.
- We need to see people and children in particular, as 'whole' people.

The fourth and final inquiry meeting, held on 22/10/96, reflected upon the Forest School cooperative inquiry project and brought the inquiry to a conclusion by discussing a holistic education model for the Forest School. This meeting is reported here in two parts which are the process of cooperative inquiry used at Forest School, followed by the discussion about the model. Firstly, participants felt that the series was hindered by
the lunchtime timeslot in that there were constant interruptions by children, noise nearby and the fact that teachers needed to hurry away from their classrooms for the research without a chance to settle down and relax for the discussions. This problem was balanced against the fact that it was the only time that all the teachers could attend because after school there are a variety of competing interests and commitments. It was stated that now that the series has been completed and people understand the potential of the process, the group would recommend that higher priority be given to finding a more appropriate time. One teacher described the process as 'brain soul' work, which needs more time. She observed that it is not just professional development, it is also personal development and mind expansion, which needs time and space. A further recommendation regarding process was visible minutes or a system of showing the group what they are doing and where they are going. I am interpreting this piece of the conversation to mean explicit tutoring about the process and about progress made with immediate feedback. This would enable individuals to have a sense of comprehension, completion and achievement at the conclusion of each meeting. It would enable them to see what they have agreed to do for the next meeting and why. One participant suggested that reflection about the process be held at the end of each meeting, to prepare recommendations for the next session. Asked if the participants felt comfortable enough with the process to do it as a group by themselves, they said generally no, not without reading through the background and becoming familiar with the structure and philosophy of the process. The group felt the need for guidance and motivation before undertaking it themselves. However, it was suggested that the process would function well as an issue resolution strategy and could be used in that context. The group discussed the need not to become stuck on jargon terms. For example during meeting three, a participant suggested that she preferred the term 'oneness' to 'ecological self', as 'oneness' now had practical meaning for her. She said that as a result of this group she had recognised herself as moving in and out of 'oneness' and had become reflective about that, consequently she had become intentional about experiencing 'oneness'.

The latter part of meeting four was a discussion around the subject of ecologically transformative education - what it would look like if we tried to draw a picture. We discussed this topic in terms of envisioning the school community. The first response was "the school is its individuals in community" (transcript, 22/10/96). The group
immediately suggested 'family' as a starting point in that the school would be as a happy and sharing group. There would be community development based upon people and their relationships, at school and at home. The community would be in tune with children through a deep home-school interconnectedness. Families have a close relationship with their children's teachers and other school families and personnel to support, care for and raise the children in a nurturing way. Here is a small vignette of this conversation:

When you have a child, you have an enormous connection to the world. The birth of a child is connected to the need to improve society. …The school together with the family can bring this about. (Transcript, 22/10/96)

The picture of the school was described as multi-dimensional - with a throbbing, pulsating heart as its centre, which focuses on nurturing each other, connecting together and connecting to the wider world. The school focuses on children, its community of families and values, and functions as an extended family. The blend of the children's achievement and development produces the school identity. In continuing the conversation, the picture was extended with the suggestion that the school starts with individual inner development, with the awareness and honest acknowledgment of what 'trips' the individual and what gives the individual the sense of 'oneness'. People ask, "what do we want for the world?" then get together with others who want it.

This current paragraph is my initiating researcher's reflection about the uniqueness of the Forest School cooperative inquiry. One participant, a young teacher, said that at the beginning of this cooperative inquiry that she had very little comprehension of either the language of the discussion or the process of the inquiry. She reported during the final meeting that as the weeks progressed she became clearer and gained a significant understanding of both the language and the inquiry process. Her point is very interesting from an initiating researcher's perspective as it points to the exceptionality of this group and context. The process can be used with other school groups, as it had been successfully used at Riverdale School. However I wondered whether the subject of 'ecological self' would be able to be discussed with other schools in the form it had been at Forest School. The language used at the Forest School inquiry was vivid, deeply felt, descriptive and on the basis of practical, empathic knowing. Apart from one young teacher, my perception of the Forest School cooperative inquiry participants is as a
group of mature, emotionally articulate adults who have reflected upon issues around 'ecological self' and ecological community development (albeit using different terms) for many years. They had a deep practical understanding of the notions we were dealing with. They had in some form, already committed themselves to a process of change and improvement of themselves and their community/world. The subject was not really new for this group. This group worked as a nurturing and caring coach for the younger teacher, within the school community as well as within this inquiry group. So on reflection, I think the group was very unique and I believe that a similar inquiry topic would take much longer to work with in another school setting. This group was ready and able to approach a conceptually and practically advanced topic, and managed incredibly well even in physical circumstances that would not normally be conducive to good group work.

In chapter six I stated that the Forest School had developed a personally and socially transformative culture. As initiating researcher of the cooperative inquiry group, on reflection I was able to see that the participants who work within the culture, had assimilated and emanated the values and practices of the culture. Over half of the group had been part of the development of the school for many years, two being founding members and two having been part of the school for more than eight years. These people had played an active and very intentional role in developing the culture to reflect ecologically and socially transformative values. In my opinion, this is why they handled the topic so articulately.

Teachers who had taught in different schools that had considerably larger class sizes expressed an understanding about their current role as a contrast to how they perceive the teacher role in different schools. They felt that part of their role in this school was to make parents feel welcome. They perceive this as a vital role and an extra responsibility to that of teachers in different schools who do not even know all the names of parents of children in their classes, let alone know the parents well enough to really discuss children's daily progress, difficulties and strengths.
Recording and Making Sense of the Inquiry

Presentational as well as propositional forms of recording and making sense were used. There was considerable imaginative, vivid, verbally descriptive model building in the second reflective phase of the second cycle. This was also the case but to a lesser degree, with the second reflective stage of the first cycle. It had the effect of producing a climate of lateral thinking and creativity. Most of the action in the action cycle was carried out between the meetings in participants observing themselves, so I cannot claim any knowledge of presentational forms of recording - participants verbally reported their observations at meetings. This inquiry was intended to be primarily informative rather than transformative, although participants did report some transformation\textsuperscript{109} spontaneously, while addressing particular topics.

The Inquiry Structure and Pattern

Each inquiry cycle was addressed by the whole group as individual investigations during the first action phase, rather than by sub-groups looking at different sub-topics or as the whole group investigating the topic together. The topic was sufficiently broad to allow divergent investigations and responses. For example the overall research question, agreed to during the first reflection phase of the first inquiry cycle was, "How can I develop or enhance my ecological self?" The agreed launching statement became specifically, "How can I, as a teacher/parent, with recognition to my 'ecological self', learn to trust the 'ecological self' of the child/children? (Learn to let go of control)". This question allowed for divergent scenarios and responses as each person addressed the topic in different ways in their interactions with children. This divergence was refocused during the second action phase which was the discussion of these experiences with the group. The second action phase enabled processing of the points discussed, with focusing questions from others. The convergence in the research was between different research cycles where the whole group inquired into a different angle of the same topic. For example the second research cycle question was, "Observe ourselves - use our ecological selves to observe the children, and acknowledge their ecological selves - consciously." This was still within the context of the broad inquiry question of:

\textsuperscript{109} As reported in the commentary about the first part of meeting four, a participant had become aware of herself moving in and out of 'oneness', and was intentional in staying with the oneness when awareness allowed. There are similar, small examples of transformation.
"how can I develop and enhance my ecological self?" It is a sufficiently similar study topic to be classed as a convergence on the topic. As with the first research cycle the first action phases of this topic were implemented during the preceding fortnight, so that during the meeting discussion focused around people's divergent experiences and observations of their interactions with others. Overall, in my opinion the inquiry had a reasonable balance between the divergent and the convergent, providing both lateral perspectives and depth of investigation.

The Story of Inquiry Initiation and Initiating Researcher Non-Dependency

There was not genuine co-ownership of the method. During the final meeting participants said that they would not feel comfortable using it by themselves for research. Reasons for this included the length of each session (only one hour) and the research season of only four research sessions over ten weeks. As initiating researcher, I steered the research quite assertively due to the shortage of time. This provided the Apollonian aspect of the research but most likely contributed to reduced possibility of a sense of ownership of the method. However there was definitely genuine collaboration in the research with a keenness to participate, to investigate the topic and to develop personally and professionally. There was definitely a co-ownership of the topic and the progress of the group and I would say, a co-ownership of the research.

Emotional and Interpersonal Competence and Anxiety

There was a high degree of emotional and interpersonal competence in dealing with underlying anxieties to which the method gave rise. Other than in research meeting one when the young teacher did not mention until the meeting was over that she was experiencing feelings of confusion and disorientation, all co-researchers talked through their anxieties and issues as they arose. The older group members 'tutored' the younger teacher in subsequent weeks at school and during the meetings so that she was able to keep up with the meeting proceedings and subsequently, transform herself and her relations with the children accordingly. Apart from this tutoring and the initiating researcher who retained a facilitator role no other differentiating roles were allocated or assumed.
The Validity of the Inquiry

The inquiry was valid for the inquiry group, being methodologically sound. There was divergent as well as convergent research conditions, genuine collaboration in the research, a balance between presentational and propositional forms of knowing and in-built experience in the design in each between-meeting break. In my opinion this group was unique, for the reasons indicated at the end of the section called, "A summary story of the research cycles" which addressed the history of social and ecological engagement in this community. A repetition of these inquiry results would be very difficult under these conditions anywhere else. In my opinion vastly improved meeting conditions, two hour meetings and several more meetings would be necessary to achieve similar results to this group who apart from one young teacher, have been intentionally involved in socially and ecologically transformative education at this school for many years.

Validity can be claimed with regard to the conduct of the research. The problem is that like the Riverdale research, the initiating researcher is writing this report after the conclusion of the research. It is not the account of the research, it is an account. It is my account of my experience of the group. It was drawn up on the basis of extensive notes as the agreed-to form of recording of the meetings, together with my postconceptual knowledge of the meetings. As indicated above my role was full co-researcher and partial co-subject. The research itself has validity. However from Heron's perspective, the research would be considered to be between ethnography and cooperative inquiry. Because the report is being written after the research without the participation of the group, this extends the description of the research towards the centre of the continuum of cooperative inquiry - ethnography. Nonetheless I claim greater epistemic validity than that of ethnography because of my partial participation in the group, whereas an ethnographer's role is generally more external in nature, being an observer rather than a participator. The research produced both propositional and practical outcomes for both the Forest School participants and myself.

The propositional outcomes for the Forest School participants are the differing types of knowledge gained, represented by the meeting notes taken by me and distributed after the meeting. Sometimes the meeting notes were added to or clarified with extra detail as requested by the co-researchers. The practical outcomes are the changed practices
around the notion of the ecological self - of the children being taught and of the teachers themselves. As initiating researcher, the propositional outcomes are represented in this report. The practical outcomes were the deepening and transformation of my understanding of the ecological self in education, as well as a deeper sense of my ecological self. As in chapter seven, my own practical outcomes enable me to ground this chapter with rigour on my participation as co-subject and co-researcher in the research project.

**Outcome of Forest School Research**

On this occasion at Forest School I had wanted to use the process of cooperative inquiry with teachers to investigate school-based ecologically transformative action. The process was effective. The teachers genuinely collaborated in the research and had a real sense of ownership of the information and practical knowing, which they used with their children. Through intentional mutual support, respect, listening and sharing, they helped each other realise their goal of enhancing their ecological selves, thereby transforming themselves and their teaching in the process. I had wanted to see if a school community had the potential to be ecologically transformative, since my earlier research had demonstrated that this school had functioned as a personally and socio-politically transformative community. The research shows that this school has the potential to bring about ecologically transformative action using cooperative inquiry. Forest School teachers supported each other in their efforts to enhance their ecological selves and in the process, intentionally acknowledged and enhanced the ecological selves of the children in their care.

It is interesting to recognise that this group of people had considerable experience of the ecological self, albeit using other terms. This cannot be explained by the cooperative inquiry alone. Considering the research conditions of limited meeting time, interruptions and considerable background noise, in my opinion both the cooperative inquiry as well as the previous experience of the individuals in the group can best explain the achievement of the group. The cooperative inquiry group simply functioned as a conduit to action. It seems that in my previous research with Forest School, I had overlooked the ecological potential of the school, probably because I did not ask sufficient questions which might have led to this conclusion. Most likely, this school
community has already functioned as an ecologically transformative community, however I have not collected evidence to demonstrate this, therefore I cannot categorically state this.

8.3 Practices to Bring the Self to Ecology

In this section, I draw the research strands of this chapter together. I do this by addressing the notion of the ecological self and connecting the notions of synergy and synaesthesia through the reflective practice and cooperative inquiry projects. Finally, I comment upon the two action research projects used in this chapter. As experiences of connection, the notion of 'embodied compassion outwards' and synergy in communicative human relationships (explored in the previous chapters) correlates with the ecological self and experiences of synaesthesia in relationships with nature. The transformation is that of an increasing orientation towards continual reconnecting - of all aspects of our own lives, of people with people and of people with nature.

8.3.1 The Transformative Task of School Communities is Reconnecting

The notion of the self is of significance in the transformation of school communities towards radical ecology. An ecological self is a reconnecting self and it underpins the transformative task of school communities, which is the task of reconnecting in each arena – community cohesiveness, interpersonal relationships/ decision-making, as well as individual commitment to learning and ecology. In terms of Fox's (1990) metaphor of Jacob's ladder as metaphor for the business-as-usual world-view, ego-bound, conceptual thinking is fore-grounded while the experience of the body is backgrounded and hyper-separated (Slaughter, 1992, Abram, 1996). Using Wilber's (1996) work egoism is the underdevelopment of self or consciousness which characterises the majority of people of the north. This is the model of experience that underpins business-as-usual society. Unless there is intention to transform it, the model of experience which underpins society is reproduced by schools (Mathews, 1980).

The ecological self notion of synergy, or synaesthesia with nature and synergy with other humans, acknowledges networks of relations that can be experienced primally (Moore, 1993, Abram, 1996). The ecological self is embodied compassion outwards
enabling the full development of the self (Fox, 2000, Wilber, 1996). The synergistic potential of the ecological self shows the 'human or nature first?' argument to be a nonsense. This is because the perceiver is connected to the perceived, when engaging with it in a participative way. Therefore, it is the reflection upon and incorporation of the experience itself, the postconceptual process, which is transformative. Abram writes that perception is phenomenologically participatory, which means that at the most intimate level, that of spontaneous meeting with the environment around us, prior to verbalising, there is “experience of an active interplay, or coupling, between the perceiving body and that which it perceives” (ibid.). From this point of view, a task for transformative school communities is to encourage or facilitate reconnection, by enabling the ecological selves to engage in ecologically restorative and fulfilling activities.

8.3.2 Reflective Practice

The process of reflective practice to enhance the ecological self can be transformational. In my reflective practice research project the transformation catalyst was not the ecological self alone, although many associated epiphanies clarified and revealed the many relationships and ways of seeing that I could access. It was the process of my attention to it, the mindfulness, the conceptualising and postconceptualising of the new and different understandings of the ecological self that was transformational. My strong intention nourished the process. For me, the reflective practice itself sustained the process of transformation. Further, it was an empowering oppositional practice. I can choose to nurture and develop personal, domestic and professional practices that are actively anti-globalisation and opposed to corporate interests.

8.3.3 Cooperative Inquiry

Cooperative inquiry worked as an effective collaborative personal-professional development method for teachers at Forest School, enabling them to support each other in their efforts to enhance their ecological awareness. It functioned as a conduit to ecological transformation, in that through cooperative inquiry, teachers focused on the ecological selves of the children and themselves. The process was based upon the cycling of action and reflection to develop propositional and practical knowledge. The
process of cooperative inquiry could work as well with other projects leading to ecological transformation, for example in the planning of an ‘ecological learning landscape’.

The notion of cooperative inquiry as support group for self is important, since there is a continual balance between the collective (the communitarian) and the individual (the ecological self) to achieve a transformative outcome for the community as a whole. The supportive nature of the Riverdale cooperative group was quite marked and was frequently commented upon and recorded during the term of the research. There are a myriad of stresses in a teacher’s and parent’s life to tempt an exist from an ecological self project, including time, ‘busyness’, and sense of priority – children and children’s work usually comes first. Problems mentioned in the course of the Forest and Riverdale projects, such as burn-out and exhaustion, are particularly significant issues in socio-political transformative work. The implicit support provided within cooperative inquiry structures may be able to address these issues in their earliest stages, before they become problems, thereby facilitating ecological management (self management) for change.

Chapter Summary

Through the research documented in this chapter, I have learned that socio-political transformation is based on journeys of personal development, comprising reorientation towards learning and reconnection. Learning to listen and work towards ‘power-with’ relationships, as discussed in the Riverdale research, and learning to accept unconditional personal responsibility, as discussed in the first Forest School research, work through the ecological self. I think it helps greatly for this to be a conscious, intentional individual commitment to change. That is, continual recommitment to the transformative journey is extremely important, since only the self can maintain the 'learner' orientation required. Habits of mind, spirit and action for transformation, described in earlier chapters, are situated with the ecological self and include ongoing commitment/recommitment.

On the basis of my experience and practical knowledge, I claim that both reflective practice and cooperative inquiry and possibly other varieties of action research are ideal for the commitment to the journey towards the ecological self and tranformation for
sustainability. I suggest that the journey is best seen as life-long and beginning with a single step, which can be taken immediately with an expression of intent. Anyone can start a reflective practice research project at any time (continuous cycles of plan, act, describe and reflect), but it does require discipline (once a day or several times a week). A cooperative inquiry project requires collaborative commitment which is a little more work to start and maintain. Importantly, it also carries the advantages of the high likelihood of development into a nurturing community as well as the support to keep going when other stresses tempt an exit from the project. The development of the ecological self is a step that I think must be taken, for a decision not to, is a decision to be complicit in ecological and social crises.
CHAPTER NINE – KNOWING IN SOCIO-ECOLOGICAL CONTEXT: SCHOOL-AS-COMMUNITY

This chapter is the first conclusion chapter of the dissertation. The chapter’s title is an answer to my overarching research question, which was: How can school people help to create a more sustainable future? I showed in chapter four that schools are inherently political organisations which historically, have successfully reproduced the societies in which they were located. This point alone suggests that schools need to be radically different if they are now to be transformative of society which is the mission of EfS.

In this chapter, I shall address the point of radically different schools through a discussion of my research outcomes in relation to the radical ecology and EfS agenda of reorientation towards sustainability. In the first section, I shall briefly review the literature pertaining to reorientation in terms of: transformative learning to connect mindscape and landscape, designing for emergence, as well as creativity for reconnection. I develop these agenda items through the work of (Orr, 1992 and 2002), Bowers (1995, 1997 and 2001) and Sterling (2001). I have used these writers in more detail than others because of the direct relevance to my empirical studies of their descriptiveness of aspects of transformative learning towards sustainability. In the second section, using Fien’s (1997) social justice curriculum focus of people and people, I discuss the findings of the Forest School ethnography and the Riverdale cooperative inquiry research using the EfS agenda items listed. Thirdly, using Fien’s (1997) ecological sustainability curriculum focus of people and nature, I address the findings of my reflective practice research and the Forest School cooperative inquiry, again using the three EfS agenda items of transformative learning, designing for emergence and creativity for reconnection.

A dilemma with the use of Fien’s binary social justice and ecological sustainability framework is that it maintains the linguistically determined illusion that social justice and ecological sustainability are separate. Thus according to Bowers (1997, 2001) the neo-liberal academic project is once again endorsing the double bind, which reinforces our deepest cultural assumptions upon which the ecological crisis is constructed. In this case, the social justice – ecological sustainability separation endorses the root metaphor (or meta-schemata) of atomistic individualism. Bowers does not provide any solutions
other than the educational one of ensuring students understand the cultural power of language, which he calls an eco-justice pedagogy (2001, 259). The Sustainable Development Education Panel would explain the dilemma as that of developing a sustainability language through a long term emergent process of learning sustainability, because it will be evolutionary rather than invented (1998a, 16, 17). Without a practicable solution to the dilemma, I shall acknowledge the paradox and continue with the task of turning attention to one matter at a time.

There is a further, related paradox. This research project is focusing on processes of reconnection, but producing a dislocated academic document comprising secondary, abstracted meaning. This task also supports Bowers’ critique of the neo-liberal academic project. ‘I’ the writer am separated from my work – although its construction holds a part of me – with the result that you, the reader only see the words on the page. I must presume that the words allow you to connect with your own experience, so that you can connect with mine. As Stables (2001, 245) writes, “environmental education (EE) is shot through with paradox”, in that it is a modernist response to a modernist crisis.

9.1 EfS as Reorientation Towards Sustainability

The [educational] challenge, articulated in Chapter 36 of Agenda 21, represents nothing less than an educational reorientation… It is… primarily to foster a new, integrated vision of education as the driving force of the future and thus bring about global change to all levels of society. (Lopez Ospina, 2000, 5, 9)

The term ‘reorienting education’ aims to enable an understanding of the education changes that development towards a sustainable society requires. Hopkins and McKeown write:

Ultimately, reorienting education toward sustainability will enable people to use environmentally responsible behaviors in everyday life, to become actively involved in political and democratic processes, to question whether public authorities are incorporating environmental protection in resource management and development plans, and to recognize biases in media and other sources of information (1999, 25).

UNESCO (2002b, 8) sees education as a “primary agent of transformation towards sustainable development”. UNESCO (1997a) proposes curricular and structural
reforms. The structural reforms are to address the structural/economic barriers to sustainability, which cannot be changed by individual teachers or schools because sustainability needs a commitment by society as a whole. A common recommendation for structural reform is localised decision-making through nationally endorsed education policies and curriculum frameworks, for example UNESCO (1997a) and Orr (2002). In section three of chapter three using the work of Sterling, Orr and Bowers, I wrote about a community culture-learning approach organised through participatory democracy. In chapter six, I documented such a culture within the Forest School community. This is an application of the political pillar of sustainability (Fien, 2001, 4 and UNESCO, 2002, 8). UNESCO (1997a, 27) advocates that education be seen as a life-long process and asserts that a reorientation of education is fundamental for development towards sustainable society.

A sustainable society, according to UNESCO, is:

One in which all aspects of civic and personal life are compatible with sustainable development and all government departments at all levels of government work together to advance such a society (1997a, 25).

Orr writes that education needs to be connective – connecting disciplines; connecting head, heart and hands; and connecting all the community of life - the seven generations, all cultures and creeds, genders and aspects of nature. The aims of education would be establishing firstly a community of life, and secondly personal wholeness and transcendence (Orr, 1992, 137, 8).

The underlying problem with much of the literature on reorienting education, as pointed out by Paden (2000, 2) using Sterling’s work, is that it assumes a direct link between education and society so that transforming education will change society (even if it were possible to transform education without transforming society). Bowers, who shows that even in our tertiary work as radicals we are engaged in a neo-liberal double bind which daily reinforces what we wish to change, emphasises this point. As Smyth, W.J. (2001, 34) points out, we are products of our own history while simultaneously being creators of it – education reproduces society. This illustrates the difficulty of changing ourselves so that we can change education. To compound these problems is the even deeper problem that society is being increasingly oriented towards the economy, which at the same time is tightening its economic grip on education (Smyth and Shacklock, 1998).
As Sterling (2001, 2002a) shows, sustainability educators need to critique and engage with the relation between education and society. UNESCO indicate the local community as the connection, for example:

Seeking sustainable development through education requires educators to… identify and pursue new human projects in the context of local sustainability within a planetary conscious and a personal and communal awareness of global sustainability (2002b, 10).

They also clearly assert that educators should be responsible for changing society, for example:

[educators are required to] place an ethic for living sustainably, based upon principles of social justice, democracy, peace and ecological integrity, at the centre of society’s concerns… and

mobilize society in a concerted effort so as to eliminate poverty and all forms of violence and injustice. (UNESCO, 2002b, 10, my emphasis)

I shall now attend to three aspects of reorientation.

9.1.1 Deep, Transformative Learning to Connect Mindscape and Landscape

With the agenda being reorientation towards sustainability, deep learning is required for paradigm transformation. Sterling (2001, 15) describes first order learning as adaptive learning, which leaves basic values unexamined and unchanged. Second order learning involves critically reflective learning, when we examine assumptions and values of first order learning. This is sometimes called metacognition, or learning about learning (for example, Bateson, 1972). Third order learning is the deep level, and enables the learner to see things differently. It is creative and entails a deep awareness of alternative worldviews and praxis. Third order learning is the paradigm transformation level, through which a changed paradigm is possible. Transformative learning is required at individual and whole society levels, towards a vision of "sustainable education and sustainable society in mutual and dynamic relationship" (Sterling, 2001, 51). Sterling (ibid.) comments that for this to occur, three paradigm dimensions are required: a vision (of philosophy and direction), an image (of core values and core ideas) and a design (for realisation of sustainability). It is only transformative learning that can lead to a reorientation of education in reality rather than rhetoric.
9.1.2 Designing for a Culturally Embedded Ecological Intelligence

Sterling (2001, 81) writes about the crucial distinction between strategic planning and ecological design. He says that strategic plans tend to be mechanistic, time-bound and controlling, whereas ecological design tends to be organic, iterative, evolving and participative. Importantly he indicates that the products of change are influenced by the journey of change and emergent properties can be designed for, but not predicted (2001, 80). He says that emergent properties are hardly recognised in education, yet they are hugely important. Emergence, which is at the heart of the new sciences of complexity, refers to the qualitative properties, or ‘living qualities’, which arise and change from the interactions between individuals or parts in a complex system. The emergent properties are not predictable from or reducible to these parts, but are critical to educational organisations and process at all experience levels. He says that with emergence in mind, “the idea of quality in education takes on a whole different meaning and relates to the total experience” (Sterling, 2001, 81).

Sterling’s work complements that of Orr (1992) and Bowers (1997, 1995). Bowers explicates the nature of the problem as cultural, and points to the deep cultural-linguistic changes that are required. Orr explicates ecological literacy as practical connection and as theory. He writes that it demands the capacity to “observe nature with insight”, merging mindscape and landscape, commenting that the landscape affects the mindscape (1992, 86). He says:

It is driven by the sense of wonder, the sheer delight in being alive in a beautiful, mysterious, bountiful world. The darkness and disorder that we have brought to that world give ecological literacy an urgency it lacked a century ago. (Orr, 1992, 85)

Ecological literacy requires seeing things in their wholeness, which is politically threatening because it also means seeing the wounds our habits have inflicted upon the landscape. Thus, it is radicalising. Orr contends that it leads to a renewed sense of citizenship to include a “planetwide” community of humans and more than human beings (1992, 88). Ecological literacy fosters a revitalised sense of place, underpinned by a more direct contact with the natural elements, the soils, wildlife and landscape of the place.
With an ecologically connected and relational view of creativity, Bowers suggests an ecologically connected notion of intelligence would better serve a culture in need of a sense of place. Bowers uses Bateson’s work to show that intelligence is embedded in the pathways and messages which link individuals – living systems are units of interaction. Living things cannot be defined independently of their living systems, which means that intelligence is ecologically embedded (Bowers, 1995, 129). Thus, if a creature destroys its environment, collaboratively or individually, it destroys itself. This is insanity rather than intelligence (Bowers, 1995, 131). From Bowers’ point of view, ecoliteracy is stronger with a cultural lens to ensure that the linguistically embedded meta-narratives do not contradict the essential point of culture-nature structural coupling (1995, 211).

**9.1.3 Creativity For Reconnection of People with Nature**

Caution is necessary in designing for transformation towards sustainability. For example, the continual need of academics to discover new knowledge together with the deep belief that the search for truth is equated to the overturning of tradition, forms an addiction to a treadmill of change (Bowers, 1997, 69). Bowers (1995) explains that a major aspect of these problems is the unassumed, unquestioned acceptance of continual creativity as progress forward. Creativity is often represented as the opposite to conformity, which suggests a rejection of considerable tradition including traditions which link people to nature.

Bowers draws attention to the notion of creativity as natural, free, expressive and original (1995, 45). In this regard Bowers refers to critical educators such as Dewey and Freire, who although they keep creativity ‘off-centre’, advocate continual emancipation as progress. The progress so formed is underpinned by the image of a self-determined, autonomous individual who is continually escaping the confines of culture through change – ultimately, emancipation from ‘life’ itself (in the sense of life-systems).

However in ecologically-based cultures, creativity is expressed within the contexts of trans-generational communication. The implication of Bowers’ work is that educators need to consider the possibilities of creativity as connection and reconnection, as ecologically embedded and relational rather than the atomistic, individual notion which is currently the linguistic status-quo. Orr’s (1992 and 2002) and Bonnett (2003) work in
reconnecting appear to answer some of Bowers’ concerns, and will be addressed below in discussion of my research outcomes.

9.2 Community Learning as a Continuous Process: People and People

UNESCO’s (1997a) EfS agenda of engaged citizenship with devolved, localised decision-making capacity, means that a sustainability challenge in the community and interpersonal relationship arenas is to transform the school towards the goal of an authentic ecologically embedded community with sustaining, dialogical, communicative relationships. The community would need to design for ongoing reconnective learning for transformation (as per Sterling, 2001 and UNESCO, 1997a, 27). For a school community learning needs to be a continuing process, as families and teachers join the journey when they join the school, work with the community building process through their learning and participation and then leave when they leave the school years later, hopefully transformed by their experience. Below I indicate procedures, processes, structures and relationships together with particular habits of action, mind and spirit for a culture of learning for sustainability. I shall now elaborate these to draw implications for EfS.

9.2.1 Transformative Learning

This research advocates a dialogical model of communication, which requires good listening. The Riverdale and Forest Schools research show that ‘to listen’ is a basic prerequisite of the process of sustainability. It is a revolutionary act to resolutely listen attentively, to be deeply respectful of people and to intentionally take a peaceful, collaborative approach to interpersonal relationships. It is most interesting that in this age of communication and communication technology, what seems to have suffered most is authentic, genuine community. It is also notoriously difficult in the culture of velocity and high-speed communication. Orr writes:

Genuine charity, good parenting, true neighborliness, good lives, decent communities, conviviality, democratic deliberation, real prosperity, mental health, and the exercise of true intelligence have a certain pace and rhythm that can only be harmed by being accelerated (2002, 52).
The words ‘community’ and ‘communication’ have the same base, meaning ‘share’ (Delbridge et al., 1982) and in practice, they are reciprocally connected.

Participatory consciousness, which Bohm (2000) says underpins true dialogue, explains the synergy described during the Riverdale cooperative inquiry. The Riverdale research shows that the development of personal skills of extraordinary perceptual and practical heed, mindfulness, openness and being present, are significant habits for intentional transformation towards participatory consciousness. When the Riverdale group observed a phenomenon that they described as synergy, they noticed that they were giving deep attention and cooperation to each other, with body language forward and engaging. Buber (1964) describes a communicative phenomenon that I suggest is the same phenomenon, as communion. It brings a deeply connective spirit of peace, which Wilber (1996, 289) and others suggest is always potentially there but the business-as-usual existence hyper-separates people through culturally embedded processes of alienation such as adversarial communication. Bonnett describes it this way when suggesting that we rehabilitate the notion of ‘knowledge by acquaintance’ into the curriculum:

Here the notion of acquaintance suggests not so much a knowledge of objectively verifiable truths about them (though it may certainly include this) but rather a direct, intimate, tacit knowledge that affects us – and that, perhaps, is closer to the Biblical sense of ‘know’ as a relatively unmediated experience of things. It follows that such knowledge may not be fully articulable because of its intense particularity and therefore non-generalisable features. (2003, 646)

I am interested in his explanation of why this relatively unmediated experience may not be fully articulable. I propose another explanation for why it may not be fully articulable, which is that it is increasingly ‘foreign’ to our increasingly abstract, highly conceptualised and hyper-separated culture of secondary meaning. English, at least, does not have common use terms to explain the phenomenon which is no longer ‘common knowledge’, because it is no longer ‘common sense’.

Transformative learning then, is becoming deeply aware of ourselves and each other. It is not becoming someone different – our society has already taught us to be someone different. Hence the significance of Moore’s (1994) understanding of “homecoming”, in the sense of coming back to ourselves, our place and our pace. The habit of mind and spirit that I call ‘unconditional personal responsibility’ is seen by Stanfield (2000, 179)
as being totally obligated and totally free at the same time. Bonhoeffer describes a similar idea as an impulse that gives union or deep connection ‘outwards’ – with other people and with nature for the good of all. At Forest School, it seems that the collective synergy from people working together with unconditional personal responsibility is the palpable spirit of community. At Forest School, community spirit develops within a commitment to ongoing learning, listening and genuine dialogue. The process and result is deeply connective. Orr writes that the essence of connective education is:

...the recognition, indeed the celebration, of interdependence between all parts. Its indicators are the requisites of sustainability: peace, harmony, justice, and participation. (1992, 137, 138)

For transformative learning, I suggest these elements of participatory consciousness through true dialogue need to be present. Deep, holistic engagement is necessary. Forest School’s community, judged by Orr’s indicators, is conducive of adult transformative learning.

As well as being joyful experiences of participation and belonging, a community can also spiral down into dysfunction so that participants feel devoid of spirit and heart. Common causes of the downward spiral that can beset a school-as-community are lack of authentic conflict resolution, individual burn-out and exhaustion, lack of designing and communication, lack of openness and transparency in decision-making, cliquiness and becoming unperceptive or unreceptive due to routinisation of work. A community can suddenly feel like an abyss of pain, often followed by a retreat into pseudo-community, a state of politeness and normality but devoid of spirit. During the resulting crisis, individuals may retreat or they can persist with it until the state of calm. The Forest School research shows that persisting through the meaningless can bring clarity, consciousness of and extra attention to relational tasks, leading to existential transformation. The calm after the storm is metaphorically a transformed and different world, waiting to be intentionally seen and experienced in different ways.

Transformative learning for people-people reconnection through participative democracy involves forms of deep cooperation. It is intentional and requires ongoing attention, learning and practice. As it is implemented at Forest School, participative democracy is anti-hierarchical, intentionally resisting domination and contributing towards a culture of justice and peacefulness, which is conducive to a deepening of the democratic dynamic. Participative democracy at Forest School provides an excellent
environment for socially transformative learning towards sustainability. It is always ongoing as process, never ‘complete’.

9.2.2 Designing a Culture of Sustainability

The Forest School research shows that community skills cannot be learned theoretically, they can only be learned practically, in community. A person might be very strongly philosophically committed to these values but without the skills to apply the values in practice. Further, the structures and rhetoric for cooperation may be in place, but these are valueless without the practical knowledge as outcome. It is not easy to construct an environment conducive to these practices, however – or every school community would have the extraordinary qualities of Forest School. For emergence of the required social environment, design (underpinned by vision and image) is required to facilitate their implementation.

In this dissertation, I am putting forward radical ecology as the philosophy that supports the vision of transformation towards sustainability and an image underpinned by a participative epistemology fused with a holistic, constructivist notion of reality. As well, I put forward a design that allows for emergence of individual and collective qualities for sustainability. I suggest participative democracy as the design, and a participatory research method such as cooperative inquiry can facilitate its development.

The main reason that education and participatory research are critical tools for change is because at the heart of life is every person’s longing for connection, meaning, mystery, knowledge, and delight (Clover, 2002, 183).

A focus on the development of authentic, sustainable community is to work on the transformation of relationships from those of hierarchy, domination and competition, to those of cooperation and communion for meaning, connection, mystery, delight and knowledge as described by Clover. The Riverdale cooperative inquiry project shows that a cooperative focus in the journey towards sustainability is a particularly sensitive and engaging one as participants are prone to discover disconcerting aspects about their ways of relating to their loved ones and colleagues. A focus on relationship enables acknowledgment of deep complicity in the practices of business-as-usual. Instead of

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110 I do not suggest that competition is totally eschewed, but intentionally employed within a cultural framework of cooperation.
smugly criticising corporate executives and others for social and ecological damage, with some surprise we recognise ourselves using naturalised, patriarchal power-over as part of our unquestioned, ordinary assumptions, conversation and practices.

In the Riverdale School research, the research method itself became the practical sustainability bridge, because of its outcome of practical knowledge as human flourishing. Sterling writes:

The sustainable society, by definition, will be a learning society. We need to start by seeing education as an essential and inseparable element of sustainable development. (1996, 210)

For the development of education as sustainability, I recommend a participative process which is based upon shared experience, cycling action and reflection with a group of similarly committed people. A focus on the transformation of relationships towards reconnection provides a motivation and opportunity for ongoing ecologically connected transformative practice. As teachers and parents, we already spend much of our daily lives constantly thinking about relationships in one way or another, however consideration of the critical implications of our relational activities might put a sharp angle on the reflections! The Riverdale research verified that cooperative inquiry is a process with the capacity for producing information about, and transformation towards genuine, authentic cooperation. The practical knowledge derived from successful cooperative inquiry is a transforming way of being. The practical knowledge is of learning sustainability, where active, intentional cooperative learning is a process of furthering practical knowledge of sustainability.

Collaborative groups and participatory research such as cooperative inquiry are useful methods conducive to the enhancement of the social capital of the public sphere. A democratic dynamic is possible in a school community. The research at Forest School shows that undemocratic rules can be addressed creatively or directly by democratic actors, but the constraints and tensions produced by anti-democratic actors are more difficult to work with. The solution to the problem of anti-democratic actors cannot be disempowerment of the empowered, because of the structural entrenchment of the empowered, who we presume will not meekly comply. It can only be through empowerment of the not-yet empowered through learning. Dryzek’s (1998, 594-596)

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I suggest that this applies to other participatory research methods as well.
adaptation of Habermas’s notion of the public sphere allows a way of seeing community development of a school towards sustainability. The public sphere (read – community sphere) can arise around the anti-democratic tendency, acting to minimise its influence. Therefore, there must be an orientation towards learning for transformation, to address an anti-democratic dynamic.

Having stated that learning for a transformative public sphere is one way to address the problem of anti-democratic actors, it is glaringly evident that a transformative school leader is particularly helpful in the task of bringing about an authentic learning community. Orr writes that ‘servant leaders’ are characterised by listening and serving, and they mentor using empathetic communication to assist with the task of transformation (1992, 78-79). Heron’s paradox of ‘leading people into freedom’ is worth consideration. He says:

They are coaching people in a discipline of method, of liberatory praxis, and are articulating it in some detail. If they coach in a way that is continually sensitive to how what they do and when they do it is respectful of human autonomy and empowering of it, then all will be well. (1996, 67)

Leadership can be a serious tension in the transformation of a school community towards sustainability. Apart from relational hierarchy, egoism and possessiveness which can be attendant, the structural problem is that leadership comes with positional responsibility. The school principal for example, is ultimately the person accountable for the school outcomes and who has legal duty of care for the welfare and safety of the school community when they engage in school activities. The positional power of non-transformative leaders can be particularly difficult for others to work with. Viewing sustainability as having a fourth, political pillar as democratic organising principle, non-democratic leaders impose a serious constraint on transformation towards sustainability.

Some people might argue that a directive leader can direct progress towards sustainability considerably faster than it would be achieved through process-based learning. While this is an interesting idea to entertain (similar to the question of whether a benevolent dictator would be better for the planet in the present time), the idea can only work with a limited understanding of sustainability. Proponents of the cultural discourses of sustainability would not dispute a political pillar as a democratic organising principle. Participative democracy does not discount the idea of leader as
coach or mentor/teacher who coaches towards participative decision-making, but it does
discount a non-participative approach.

We often hear of schools that have had wonderful environmental education programs
and practices, and in fact in Western Australia several of these have won prestigious
awards. Unfortunately when the principal or person who directed the program leaves the
school, the program may be discontinued. This means that the community, or even other
staff, did not feel a sense of connectedness or ‘belongingness’ with it – it was not
embedded in the culture of the community (Wooltorton and Kidd, 2003). These
programs are not sustainable. Transformative leadership demands considerable
interpersonal, emotional and social skill, maturity and wisdom to facilitate participation
as deep connectedness. The point of this section is that authentic participative decision-
making can facilitate the development of practical knowledge of sustainability.
Leadership can be an anti-democratic tension and there are democratic means of
minimising the tension through learning.

Coincidentally, the idea of practical knowledge also explains why ‘children do not do
what we tell them, they do what we do’. They can learn facts and concepts about
environmental repair and the interconnected injustices of the planet and racial tolerance.
They can pass all the tests and maybe remember the concepts for their whole lives. But
it will not help them to be racially tolerant when required or to practice environmental
care on a daily basis or to disengage from activities that are causally related to social or
ecological injustice. This is because propositions about practice are secondary to
demonstrations of practice and do not guarantee that learners will be able to execute the
practice.

Heron says that we grasp the meaning of the knack only through mastery of it but "we
can get a feel for this internal meaning-by-doing by seeing someone display or picture
their mastery of it" (1996, 93). This means that adult and child learners need to 'do'
practices regularly and be immersed in them. They need to talk about their practices and
experiences, critique them, reflect upon them and cycle the stages constantly,
throughout their lives. Alternatively where this is not possible, regularly watching
others do the practice will give learners a feel for "the internal meaning-by-doing"
(Heron, ibid.). This means that being in a culture of transformation, by doing and
observing, will help children grow into a transformative culture. I have a book of art and poetry produced at a Buddhist school for primary and secondary children in Thailand (Dek Rak Pa School, 1998). Under one of the pictures a young child, Suriyan Duangchit, had written, "What I do everyday is my teacher. It is not just a toy." I marvel at the insight. Unfortunately, because we live, work and are regulated within a consumerist, corporatising, globalising society and culture, it is this culture that our children are currently growing within. As teachers, parents and communities learn new cultural patterns of relationship and care of each other and nature, our children will learn to do what we do. Hence, even within the complexity of the meta-schematic thrust towards economic determinism, community practices for sustainability are practices of the most radical kind.

The strength of cooperative inquiry is its ability to give participants practical experience of a transforming and therefore, a transformed culture. I suggest that authentic communities have already developed their own collaborative cyclical reflective practices to fill this function, intentionally or otherwise. I suggested at the outset that a likely reason why people know, individually and collectively, of the extent and magnitude of the social and ecological crises, but do not act for transformation is that they do not know how to go about changing. Sterling (2000, 53) suggests that this is because it is easier to talk about it than do it!. Yencken (1994, 226) suggests that the problem is our traditional assumptions about knowledge and knowledge generation, which is positivist and results in separation of knowledge producers from the decision makers and the users of the knowledge. For sustainability, we need a knowledge generation model that is iterative, that alternates between “objective intellectual activity and subjective experiential understanding”, and which respects ordinary language and beliefs and understands and integrates all the influences holistically (Yencken, 1994, 226). Cooperative inquiry suits this purpose.

9.2.3 Creativity Through Reconnection

My research reinforces Heron’s (1996) assertion that information does not necessarily bring about transformation. This is because even if structures and the rhetoric of participation and cooperation are in place, these do not have 'meaning', without practical knowledge of the lexicon. A participative structure may be in place, for example in an
organisation, but this structure cannot guarantee the use of cooperative communication processes which are underpinned by genuine listening and respect. I am claiming that participative structures are necessary for the implementation of cooperative, socially transformed ways of working but not sufficient. The structures as well as the processes as well as the practical knowledge must be present. We all know of late modern schools that are structured as participative organisations, with a principal well-versed in the discourse of collaborative leadership and teams of people responsible for all key decisions. The principal might be on a few of these teams. We probably all know of an example of these types of schools where morale is low and people seem to be bickering constantly. The staff room seems to be cliquey, people talk about each other behind backs and some people do not feel comfortable participating in their teams because there are hidden agendas that prevent genuine participation. These schools need practical knowledge of connective, communicative, sustaining relationships. A research method conducive to the development of wisdom, such as cooperative inquiry, would provide a starting place to move forward. The point here is that the creative system works for reconnection holistically. Individual elements are insufficient. Ironically, the practical knowledge of participation, which is outcome, is necessary for the structure to work through the communication processes, creating a circular, interdependent series of conditions and justifications.

In the example of the dysfunctional staff room, the people in teams in the school with the leader versed in collaborative leadership did not have the practical knowledge of participatory engagement. They simply imported their hierarchical relationship skills that are the standard, daily habits of business-as-usual. In my opinion, this insight about the importance of the development of practical knowledge is crucial for the transformation of the model of experience that constitutes society. In many respects, the notion of a ‘professional’ teacher works in tension against a communicative model of collegial learning and action. The commitment to “professional and ethical standards” (for example Cole and Chan, 1994, 17) can mean silence about forms of injustice, which cause an anti-democratic dynamic. Stilted communication caused by conversational ‘no-go’ areas underpins Scott Peck’s (1987, 86) “pseudo-community”. It is not authentic and cannot lead to transformation or practical knowledge about
sustainability. I suggest that research is required in the field of EfS regarding the meaning and nature of teachers ‘professional and ethical standards’.

9.3 Transforming Consumerist Culture: People and Nature

As Lewis Mumford once said: the moral alchemy [of the economy we have constructed] converted the seven deadly sins (pride, envy, sloth, greed, gluttony, avarice, and lust) into economic virtues necessary for the growing economy. Its focus is the self isolated from obligation, tradition, community, and ecology. Until we confront what modernity has done to us as people and resolve to do otherwise, we can only put Band-Aids on terminal problems. (Orr, 1992, 181)

The angle that I have taken in this research is that reconnecting people with nature means that a primary concern is the transformation of hierarchical, power-over, dualistic relationships with nature to those of connection and ‘being with’. This is of significance because the consumerist culture is devouring the planet and is antithetical to authentic, sustainable community (Plumwood, 1993; Fox, 2000). Orr writes that we are deeply religious creatures. He says:

    The religious impulse in us works like water flowing up from an artesian spring that will come to the surface in one place or another. Our choice is not whether we are religious or not as atheists would have it, but whether the object of our worship is authentic or not. (2002, 24)

Learning to consume has become the deepest educative process at work in the twentieth century (Welton, cited in Clover, 2002). I suggest that to reconnect people with nature, the task of school communities is to develop the ecological self of each of its members through ecologically restorative, personally fulfilling activities.

The ecological self is the actualising, ecologically interconnected spiritual growth of the conatus, self and consciousness. It involves the postconceptual re-inhabiting of the world of primary experience through the experiencing body, facilitating actualisation of consciousness and spirituality (Abram, 1996). Deep connections are substantiated, cemented and maintained through the self. A developed ecological self is aware that working through one's ecological self is working to enhance relationships with nature and people.
9.3.1 Transformative Learning Towards Reconnection With Nature

I documented how the process of reflective practice helps to enhance my ecological self in chapter eight. For me, the process of my postconceptual attention to my ecological self is transformational, more so than an experience of synaesthesia which is, by definition, open to consciousness only when the analytic logic is suspended (Abram, 1996, 59 – 61). By this I mean that rather than the experience itself, the mindfulness and the cyclical postconceptual attention make my new and different experiences transformational. For me, regular sensory, reflective experiences in natural settings such as the garden, the bush, the forest or the desert, are helpful to maintain the integrity of the ecological self – to feel, to remember the sense of oneness and deep interconnectedness with all of life. Referring to a passage of Abram’s reflection on sensory engagement, Bonnett writes:

And what do we learn from such engagement? It might be argued that we learn how to be in the world, to find a home in it. (2003, 648)

Bonnett uses Cheney’s work to elaborate an account of this learning relationship with nature as a ‘conversation’ between world and person, in which our part is to prepare ourselves spiritually and ethically for knowledge reception. This conversational way of knowing and learning contrasts markedly from what he calls the monologue associated with the acquisition of knowledge when nature is occluded by the “ossifying effects” of abstracted, conceptual thought (2003, 646, 647). He writes of the sense of knowing nature as a complex, local, emotional and dialogical process.

The process of reflection and contemplation about ecological experiences and associated epiphanies helps to clarify and reveal the many relationships and ways of ‘seeing’, ways of understanding. For me, personal critically reflective practice is an empowering reconnective practice. The journaling aspect of reflective practice can be hard to maintain as it requires considerable discipline, especially in the first weeks and months when the habit is being established. A visual diary might be the simple remedy for people for whom writing is not particularly enjoyable. A visual diary is one with blank pages and the diarist simply draws, possibly with the late addition of words, but this is not essential. The visual diary helps develop presentational knowledge which

112 In the previous chapter I described synaesthesia as an overlap and blending of the senses during perception (Abram 1996, 59 - 61).
arises from deepened, disengaged participation with the experience. My cooperative inquiry research at Forest School showed how this ‘reflective practice’ can become a community practice.

**9.3.2 Designing for Emergence of an Ecologically Embedded Culture**

Orr writes that a second aim of connective education is transcendence and personal wholeness. He likens it to the Greek concept of Paideia, which involved:

> a search for the “divine centre”. Its methods were those of open dialogue, participation, and experience. … Paideia assumed no distinction between learning and living. Learning was aimed to achieve mastery in the art of life; life and culture were the school. (1992, 138)

In a myriad of creative ways co-inquirers in a cooperative inquiry can assist each other to be reflective about and engage deeply in the task of ‘ecologising’ the self. In the Forest School cooperative inquiry research, the process helped to enhance the ecological selves of adults at the school and consequently the children at the school. Although participants at Forest School where the process was used were already well established on the journey to sustainability, I claim that it is useful for teachers and parents at any school because of its potential for reorientation. At Forest School in a limited number of sessions, the process gave the extra advantage of enabling a better understanding of each other's experiences and difficulties leading to more supportive work relationships. Most schools would require a much more sustained process because they will be beginning of the transformation towards sustainability, which Forest School clearly was not.

I made judgments about the Forest School’s ecological sustainability in the report which forms chapter six, and subsequently found them to be an underestimation when I later experienced the wisdom in the group and then reflected on the depth of the practical ecological knowledge embedded in the community. Far from causing doubt about the outcome of my original research, the acknowledgement enables me to understand that as I develop my own socio-ecologically contextualised knowledge of culturally sustainable community, I am able to see more embedded wisdom in others. This insight partly explains the notion of ecological design as paradox for EfS, in that we cannot plan for sustainability because we do not yet have the practical knowledge. We cannot predict what it might be like, but we can design for it.
I suggest that cooperative inquiry, through its outcome of practical knowledge as human flourishing, is helpful to pace collaborative transformation towards Maslow’s self-actualisation in community. This fulfils the social task of individual maturity towards wisdom, which Wilber (1996, 249) indicates that micro communities would need to address in the absence of a functional, cooperative society. This is substantial since according to Fox (1990, 45) and others, the majority of people of the north are characterised by egoism, the underdevelopment of self or consciousness, which leads to unsustainability. A casual read of the daily newspapers would support that sentiment but a critique of the business review pages would be convincing for those still in doubt. Cooperative inquiry has considerable application for the outcome of environmental citizenship, for example by eco-villages, environment centres and forms of direct civil action. It also has wide application for groups of people who regularly meet for educational, work or other purposes who would like to engage in an ecologically and personally transformative practice.

9.3.3 Creativity for Reconnectedness

We all have an ecological self, which can be repressed by ego-bound thinking. The self is an important focus in transformation, which I suggest begins with personal choice. This research shows some evidence that attendance at cooperative inquiry group meetings, and discussion at a deeply personal and reflective level, will not necessarily be transformative without a commitment to reconnected transformation of the self. In terms of Bowles' and Gintis' (1986) distinction between a radical democracy of learners and a liberal democratic polity of choosers, the irony is that commitment to radical democracy is a choice. Individuals can choose to fully perceive the world and each other in full, embodied, fleshful ways to reveal our deep consciousness of interconnectedness and transcendence (Abram, 1996). The difference between a humane, sustainable world and an environmentally degraded nightmare are individual choices and collaborative decisions by people capable of acting virtuously - with maturity, love, foresight and wisdom (Orr, 1992, 182).

The decision to commit to sustainability is not always a conscious choice. Some people intuitively orient themselves towards a life-time of teaching against the grain, or

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113 For example, see White's (2001) story and picture on Australian millionaire Rene Rifkin, that focuses on Rifkin as seemingly
permaculture gardening, or voluntary community engagement, or social activism, or ecological campaigning, or local political participation. Others upon invitation, are willing to take emotional risks and participate in intentionally transformative activities for the sake of the children, the school, the community or the environment. However some people are reluctant to leave an egoistic status quo, even though they can acknowledge that some of their habits are damaging to themselves or others. Even when surrounded by people who participate in, discuss and exemplify various types of transformative work, the reluctant ones are simply not willing to engage in any types of activities which might enable them to transform power-over approaches to relationships or organisational management. They are not able to detach from tasks or work-loads that others could do more quickly, or more efficiently but differently.

In relating perception as participation with the more than human cosmos, Abram says the following:

It may be that the new “environmental ethic” toward which so many environmental philosophers aspire – an ethic that would lead us to respect and heed not only the lives of our fellow humans but also the life and well-being of the rest of nature – will come into existence not primarily through the logical elucidation of new philosophical principles and legislative strictures, but through a renewed attentiveness to this perceptual dimension that underlies all our logics, through a rejuvenation of our carnal, sensorial empathy with the living land that sustains us. (1996, 69)

Abram indicates the interesting apparent divergence in language function between Indigenous, oral cultures, and globalised cultures of the north. Language in oral cultures functions to encourage the participatory life of the senses, while language in cultures of the north function to deny the senses, causing a distrust of sensorial information to the advantage of the abstract, conceptual realm (1996, 71). It is this problem that a focus on the ecological self to reveal and enhance the sensory realm attempts to address. Abram calls this to “make sense” – to re-awaken and rejuvenate the senses to where they are in the world.

choosing hedonism, narcissism and egoism.
Chapter Summary and Conclusion

We are faced with a new set of conditions – interdependence, complexity and uncertainty – which require new thinking and new learning, in business, politics and in education (Sterling, 2002b).

My research shows the potentially transformative effect of thinking and learning when reflecting upon our sensory, tacit experience. The research used processes of cyclical reflection on primary, unmediated experience to form transformative, postconceptual, practical knowing. In applying these participative research processes, we are shaping culture by reconnecting to each other and nature whilst living our daily lives. The research processes thus enable social inquiry and community development as well as socially and personally informative and transformational learning. The use of a participative epistemology, which is within the mind-matter integration worldview has facilitated this research and seems to be fundamental to Sterling’s description of transformative learning. I claim that a participative epistemology is fundamental to the further development of the concept and practice of sustainable development as learning process (Sterling, 2001, 19; Scott, 2002, 2). I suggest that participative consciousness is a key to sustainability, through the enhanced capacity to develop sensory, reconnective forms of knowing and learning. First it is a choice, however.

Postconceptual, participative knowledge processing is transformative in reconnecting people with people and nature and results in practical knowledge of ‘transformed being’. This socio-ecologically contextualised knowing underpins Abram’s “making sense” – re-engaging the senses in the world, to mindfully experience the world to integrate mind and matter. In this research, reorientation towards sustainability, which is the radical ecology and EfS agenda, comprises a reorientation towards continuous reconnecting – of all aspects of our own lives, of people with people and people with nature. Bowers (1995) writes that ‘intelligence’ emanates from or through ecological interconnectedness – as a result of reflective sensorial engagement (or it is not intelligence).

Using the mind-matter integrative worldview, participative epistemology and participative consciousness, sustainability will necessarily be emergent, resulting from our ongoing transformative learning. Consequently, the sustainable society will necessarily be a learning society (Sterling, 2001, Fien and Tilbury, 2002, 5). Scott puts
it this way: “It is crucial to recognise that sustainable development will not be taking place where learning is not happening” (2002, 2). Taking this into account, my research adds to the work of Scott (2002), UNESCO (2002b, 20) and Sterling (2001) who advocate for the significance of learning to learn. UNESCO states:

Just as we learnt to live unsustainably, we now need to learn our way out – to learn how to live sustainably (2002b, 7).

The goal of a sustainable society demands radically different ways of enacting school and society, which first have to be learned. Thus, we need to learn sustainability. Accordingly, I see education as sustainability (Sterling, 2001) as a transformative process of connecting people with each other and nature through deep participative engagement. The central concern is one of learning and living sustainability - through genuine dialogue and deep, reciprocal participation in life. This research adds weight to the idea of transforming culture by changing the model of experience that underpins school and society. For this to work, I suggest that the interface of school and society needs to be considerably broadened at the local community level, towards the notion of school-as-community.

On the basis of the research carried out at Forest School and Riverdale School I wish to suggest a broadening of the notion of ‘school’. Comparatively few environmental education or EFS writers seem to regard the ‘whole school’ as including even the parents, let alone broader community members as well. For example, the unstated assumption in UNESCO (1997a, 25) is school comprises the teachers and children114. I suggest an expansion on the following UNESCO conclusion:

Reorienting education for sustainability … does require governments willing to model an inter-departmental, cooperative approach to sustainable development. Schools, other educational institutions and the community at large could then take up that lead with whole-of-school, community-inclusive approaches that aim to engage each individual, adult and child, in the process of seeking sustainable lifestyles… It is a goal that requires commitment from across the community, a commitment that can only be developed through education. (UNESCO, 2002b, 44)

My research suggests that there is much to gain by seeing school-as-community (rather

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114 The particular paragraph in UNESCO (1997a, 25) does refer to the requirement of: “society’s stakeholders to work collaboratively and in partnership, including industry, business, grassroots organizations and members of the public, to develop policies…[for the] commitment by society as a whole to sustainable development”, but it does not specify or clarify a broader view of the school (my emphasis).
than seeing ‘community’, however defined, as an appendage to the school). I suggest that we begin to think about the school as comprising the administration, teachers, parents and children together with members of other stakeholder groups such as environmental agencies and NGOs, as described by Senge et al. (2000, 11). The organising principle would be engagement in participative decision-making about school policies and activities, which is in line with the School Education Act 1999 (WA). The learning principles would be underpinned by socio-ecologically contextualised knowing.

Socio-ecologically contextualised knowing resonates with a metaphysical state that Bonnett calls ‘sustainability as a frame of mind’, which is a perspective on the set of fundamental epistemological, metaphysical and ethical considerations of humanity (2003, 685). By sustainability as a frame of mind, he refers to the transformed state as a re-generation or retrieval of the essential human nature of how things are consciously perceived and experienced in dialogical connection. It is as a homecoming to who and how we are, rather than some externally imposed or imported condition. It is only possible at the human level of conscious functioning as opposed to the occluded, abstract world of secondary meaning. He asserts that it is only at this primary, participative level of conscious functioning that notions such as empathy, identification, care, sympathy and responsibility are possible (ibid., 685, 686).

Bonnett warns that this idea should not be seen as a frame of mind that will bring about sustainability, because this would cast sustainability only as a policy whose chief problems were implementation, rather than being about meaning and motive (2003, 690). Rather, he suggests seeing sustainability as a frame of mind. My Riverdale School research showed that the transformed state of having practical knowledge of cooperation, is transforming in the sense that the postconceptual, socio-ecologically contextualised knowledge is of learning sustainability in its direct, participative reaching out through processual dialogical connection. Thus the way I see it, in Bonnett’s ‘sustainability as a frame of mind’, the state of sustainability is ‘learning sustainability’.

This idea of sustainability problematises Scott’s (2002, 1) definitions of sustainability as goal and sustainable development as process. This is because sustainability as goal is
process. Sustainability is not some static, visualised end state (Wals and Jickling, 2002, 224). The idea of sustainability as processual end state, as frame of mind and as learning, is commensurate with the idea of sustainability as human flourishing. That is, sustainability is a qualitative orientation that is justifiable for its own sake because it is intrinsically worthwhile. Bonnett (2003, 689) says it this way:

...if sustainability as a frame of mind is essential to human flourishing, its desirability is not ultimately dependent on whether it will lead to ecological sustainability somehow externally defined, though given its fundamental motive to reveal and safeguard things in their own nature, it is difficult to think that it would not be compatible with most versions. Rather, its achievement in some degree is what gives point to the achievement of any such ecological sustainability, and as such should define its character.

The nature of transformative learning as I see it now, as process based on cyclical reflection on experience, reconnects me to my years of being with Aboriginal people. Although everywhere we see references to ‘new’ ways of thinking, seeing and learning (for example Sterling 2002b) there is nothing new about it. This is not a ‘discovery’ of postmodern education theorists or EfS advocates. Rather, it seems to resemble an Aboriginal process of knowing, which has been practised for very many thousands of years. Indigenous knowledge could be called “processes of knowing in socio-ecological context” (O’Donaghue and Janse-van Rensburg, 2002, 17). Bonnett comments that aspects of the character of indigenous knowing can resonate with Western consciousness so as to assist us to retrieve ways of knowing that we possess but which are now seriously minimised or occluded in education (2003, 649). We are all indigenous to the planet Earth. To reconnect with each other and nature is to rediscover how to postconceptually experience ourselves, who we are, where we live and how we know.
CHAPTER TEN – BRIDGING THE GAP TO SUSTAINABILITY THROUGH SCHOOL-AS-COMMUNITY

Sustainable development [can be seen as] an inspired way in which a bridge can be built between two conflicting paradigms, between the paradigm that has underlain past Western approaches to the environment and an emerging new environmental paradigm (Yencken, 1994, 221).

Yencken’s understanding of sustainable development is underpinned by a process approach – a transformative approach which focuses on cooperation between perspectives and interests in order to transcend conflicting worldviews to enable sustainability to emerge. The process approach to sustainability is gaining increasing currency in the literature, in association with the recognition that reflexive, needs based local community responses are required (for example, Fien and Tilbury, 2002, 3-4; Dryzek, 1998, 596 and IUCN, UNEP and WWF, 1991). Sustainability as process focuses on people and the making and implementing of decisions towards a liveable, socially just, ecologically viable future. In this research, I have shown that a process approach to sustainability is a learning approach. A different consciousness is required – one underpinned by a participative epistemology.

I have written this dissertation from the perspective of the first person engaged in the journey of transformation towards sustainability because I recognised that the transformation could not be 'out there' without also being 'in here'. Kabir, quoted in Reason (1988) says: "If you have not lived through something, it is not true". From this perspective, an experiential phenomenon cannot be verified by the researcher unless the researcher has lived it. I used personal-professional critically reflective practices to connect the research with my own life experience. Participatory research explicitly intends to collectively inquire into reality with the intention of transforming it, so my project of seeking ways for transformation towards sustainability needed to incorporate participatory research. I used cooperative inquiry as the method to ground learning for sustainability in the lived experience of a collaborative group.

As a participatory research method, cooperative inquiry enables discussion and transformation in real life circumstances about the issues around sustainability in localised contexts. This can be an exceptionally rewarding and/or a very tricky
endeavour, in that it can be intensely socially and politically confronting for participants and non-participants alike. For example, confronting issues around participation and the development of participative structures with people who view the world in terms of their own positional power can cause significant transformation or significant opposition to the augmentation of democracy. This is a local microcosm of a global issue, and my study of this is a local case with global implications.

An obstacle to be overcome (in any socially critical research) is the tendency to use deep patterns of unquestioned, 'obvious' assumptions, even when we think we are being critical, subversive and liberated (Bowers, 1997, 28). Cooperative inquiry uses the development of critical subjectivity and critical intersubjectivity to address this. Further, the process is a very paradoxical endeavour, in that its end result is practical knowledge\(^{115}\) which cannot be shared. This is elitist! Only the doers can know it! This is why we cannot transform others, we can only transform ourselves. Propositional and presentational knowledges can be shared, and experiential and practical knowledges can be described but not shared because experiential and practical knowledges must be experienced (and reflectively cycled in the case of practical knowledge). This is also the paradox of sustainability, in that propositional knowledge, commitments and policies will not make it happen until it is lived experience. Hence, the importance of learning sustainability, that is, to 'live', 'experience', and 'be' sustainability. Only the learner can learn. This is a key to asking and answering the question of the generalisability of this research, which I address in section 8.2 of Appendix Eight.

Because of the paradox of sustainability as lived experience, the research outcome of socio-ecologically contextualised knowing is by nature not generalisable, since each group needs to construct it for themselves. In Appendix Eight I firstly defend the two research schools against the charge that they are elitist. Following this I consider a series of issues, in order to show that there are comparable conditions at other schools. I assert that the structural conditions that mitigate against EfS in state schools also affect the research schools, suggesting that application of the research is possible in some other schools. That is, I consider that learning sustainability is possible in these other schools.

\(^{115}\) As the culmination of cycles of experiential, presentational, propositional and practical beliefs and knowledges.
Even if a school decides to develop as an authentic, sustainable community, individuals need to make their own personal commitment. As Sterling writes, this is much easier in a collaborative context of deep personal and professional reflection (2001, 16). The paradox of learning sustainability, is that first a person must understand that there are choices to make. Some people may never see that they can choose to learn to live and relate differently. The sustainability bridge is a very long journey, which for some can be fraught with pain but for all, the potential is there to make an individual and collective contribution towards a sustainable, liveable future through a school-as-community.

**Implications for the EfS Research Agenda**

In section 8.1 of Appendix Eight, I present politically different understandings of participation which have significantly affected the school devolution movement. The school devolution movement is increasingly being acknowledged and valued by the sustainability movement (for example, IUCN, 2002c). However although it was originally intended to facilitate local control of schools so that the people who make the decisions are responsible for implementing them, devolution has constantly been under siege from the economic determinists whose requirements for accountability enabled only limited, instrumental self-management. Consequently for many years instrumental self-management did little to enable one of the original goals, which was meaningful community participation in the governance of schools.

Devolution was originally intended to address three serious deficits identified in the 1973 Karmel report, which were “inadequate resources, inequalities in provision and opportunity, and quality of education that fell short of expectations” (Caldwell, 2002). There was no particular theory on how this was to eventuate and “no explicit ‘theory of action’ that connected devolution to learning in direct cause-and effect fashion” (Caldwell, 2002, 13). Ironically thirty years later the same deficiencies remain, although according to Caldwell, progress has been made but the bar has been raised. Caldwell sees that now the basic building blocks for devolution are in place, considerable effort needs to be given to the task of supporting and enhancing civil society through the civic development of schools. However he recommends that this be done by blurring the
distinction between public and private schools, because he accredits the lack of achievement of the devolution movement with the fact that it is public.

Caldwell writes that:

For many people, public education can never be other than a system of schools that are fully publicly owned and fully publicly funded... We have allowed such a view to be sustained for too long in this country at the cost of a wider sense of responsibility for schools. …[E]xclusive reliance on government may have served to weaken civil society…[S]ome countries have lost their ‘trust’ [in their governments] through the decline of civil society. Australia may also lie in this category, with near total reliance on the public sector in government schooling serving to strip away much of the support of civil society. (2002, 15).

On the basis of Caldwell’s flimsy claim, just when local management of Western Australian state schools is beginning to enable goals which are compatible with sustainability according to Estill et al.’s research (which is published under the name of the Western Australian government), it is likely that the agenda will once again be stolen by the economic determinists, this time using the rhetoric of the advance of civil society. It seems that the irony of the devolution movement is that it has been a huge social experiment. Vast sums of money have been spent and lengthy reports have been dispersed, on the basis of little thorough empirical research (Smyth and Shacklock, 1998, 135). Schooling has always been a site of cultural and political struggle. I suggest that EfS researchers and advocates contest the ethical, social and ecological issues around devolution before the agenda is further privatised.

There is much research required for EfS in the field of sustainable school community development in Catholic systems of schooling and in the large independent schools, as well as in medium and large sized state schools. Human scale is one important determinant of a sustainable school but this does not mean that medium and larger schools cannot move towards sustainability. It is likely that through subsidiary, the community benefits of a small school may be more easily achievable. Writers such as Carnie (2001) say that small schools nested in community and environment are best placed to develop children’s confidence and healthy relationship with the world. The study of the community of Forest School showed that a participatory school community almost continuously models engaged citizenship in decision making and action contexts.
I suggest that a thorough exploration of the notion of environmental citizenship in the context of the school-as-community is required. Environmental citizenship is the outcome of a considerable number of international environmental education organisations and policies (for example, UNEP, 1997; Vermont Institute of Natural Science, nd) and yet this concept is quite under-developed in the literature. Similarly, the notion of ecological social capital also needs considerable development. Ecological social capital could be a linking concept in discussions about ecological communities and socially critical sustainable schooling, and yet I have not seen reference to it.

I recommend further exploration of the idea of education as sustainability. Orr (1992, 90, 91) proposes six foundational principles upon which to educate people to live sustainably. My research affirms that these should be central concerns in EfS. Jickling (1992, 2002) is concerned that the language of sustainability conceals contradictory positions, with no inherent clue about their resolution with the danger that the contradictions may be accepted without dilemma. Consequently, he recommends what he calls a “linguistic tools” teaching approach to the problem of the irresolvable contradictions at the heart of sustainability to provide students with a socially critical philosophical analysis method by which they may gain the ideas, tools and language they need for new possibilities. Jickling says:

we must make room for talk about ‘wonder’, ‘magic’, and ‘the sacred’

On the basis of my research, I suggest that Jickling’s approach is both important and limited. Its limitation is its emphasis on conceptual meaning, working with abstractions in isolation from experience.

It is likely that Jickling has simply omitted to mention a learning to learn approach which might involve substantial primary experience and reflection, because at the start of the article he sensitively described his own many connective ecological experiences with wolves which enabled his own practical knowledge to develop through substantial reflection over the years. As transformative educators, connecting experience with talk, reflectively and cyclically, is very significant. Where possible, education should connect children to their place through experience and cycles of socially critical reflection. Along with Jickling (2000, 33) I suggest that we think long and hard about the nature, culture and purpose of education itself. What is it, how does it work and how should it
work? If we see sustainability as human flourishing, the individual educational purpose of self-actualisation is commensurate with the socially transformative purpose of education for sustainability.

**Conclusion: Bridging the Gap to Sustainability**

The problem for this dissertation has been how to transform a school community towards sustainability, so that it creates and models the values and practices that children need to learn for a sustainable future. Social learning occurs by watching, participating and assimilation. Children learn the culture through which they are raised and in which they are immersed. It follows that if the intention is for children to be active citizens who act according to the values of democratic process, social justice and ecological sustainability as per the Western Australian Curriculum Framework (1998) and UNESCO (1997), adults need to create a cultural environment which models and illustrates these values. The cultural environment of sustainability is fundamentally different to the business-as-usual life-way of individualism, egoism and hierarchy in which learning to consume is the deepest imperative.

For transformation towards sustainability, UNESCO’s (1997a) ethics require an endorsement of plurality together with an empowered, vibrant, engaged citizenship with devolved decision-making capacity at the local level. As Clover (2002) writes, it is important that people have an understanding of the means through which they might create a collective localised sustainability framework for local action. This point is very important. If we see sustainability as a vision which will emerge through a process of learning and transformation for reconnection, we need a political, process-oriented understanding of sustainable development in order to organise for, and facilitate its emergence democratically: a competent, active citizenry to organise for the sense of place that ecological democracy, ecofeminism and deep ecology aspire towards.

Accordingly, the four interdependent systems pillars of sustainability, which are the biophysical, economic, social - cultural and political systems (Fien, 2001, 4-5 and UNESCO, 2002b, 8) offer a way forward through principles of conservation, peace and equity, appropriate development and democracy. With democracy as the organising
system, this is an ecological democracy position\textsuperscript{116}. The economically determinist version of sustainable development has been extensively trialled since the 1987 Brundtland report and the current state of the planet provides some evidence that it does not lead to sustainability. For the possibility of a sustainable future it is not the economy but people who need to make decisions now and for this they need socio-ecologically contextualised learning. Clearly, local and state actions will have to be the socio-cultural hub of Australia’s environmental restoration work since the federal government is not prepared to accept its proper responsibility. Further, strong political action is required to rectify serious policy and accountability issues. If we see a nexus between education and sustainability, a contributing reason that our society is not sustainable (according to any definition of sustainability) is that education is not central to sustainable development policies or praxis. Education is still seen as separate – the province of schools, TAFES and universities. Australia has an urgent need for transformative, re connectsive learning to be embedded in every policy context.

Reconnective transformative learning has emerged as a key to bridging the gap to sustainability in this research. Sterling (2001, 15) says that the transformative level of learning, which involves a shift in consciousness, is required for individual and whole society movement towards sustainability. Habits of mind, spirit and action include the reconnective skills of learning to nurture, learning to transform relationships, learning to reconnect with nature, learning to choose wisely and learning to learn which includes learning to post conceptually re-inhabit the world of primary experience, learning to perceive fully, learning to cooperate and learning to participate effectively in participatory decision-making. These are necessary in order to transform the model of experience that constitutes society thereby at the school-as-community level, transforming education and society. I can say the following on the basis of my experience of this research. It is relatively easy to change curriculum content to include practical environmental activities to reconnect people with nature with little or no structural change at the school. On the other hand, from the perspectives of both the empowered and the disempowered, it is extremely challenging to change the culture of a community so that people genuinely cooperate in peaceful, just, democratic relationships of care.

\textsuperscript{116} Like each radical ecology position, ecological democracy enables the incorporation of the insights of the other radical ecology positions.
The habits of mind, spirit and action referred to above are already named in the various EfS curriculum recommendations (for example UNESCO 1997a, Fien 2001, Orr 1992 and 2002, Huckle 1996 and Sterling 2001). I would emphasise learning about learning (Fien, 2001, Sterling, 2001) as well as the importance of processes for the development of knowing in socio-ecological context (Heron, 1996; Bonnet, 2003) including reflective practice and cooperative inquiry. As a result of the postconceptual knowledge processing for this dissertation, I now understand the curricula differently – in a more practical way. Lists of recommendations are information only, which are not in themselves transformative until they become the practical knowledge of the knowers. I have nothing new to add to EfS curricula, other than the rider that they need to be used as or through culturally and ecologically embedded processes for socially critical transformation of self and society. Used as the basis of transmissive courses and seminars, they are a waste of the paper and energy used to deliver them. I cringe every time I see the word delivery used in the context of education, which is astonishingly regular in the Nelson era\textsuperscript{117}. I visualise a station wagon full of computers with the sign on the side: Delivering Education to South West Communities\textsuperscript{118}. Transformative learning occurs through the deeper level of people-people and people-nature communication, involving cooperation for paradigm shifting towards a new way of being human in a post-modern, complex world.

Education in Australia is underpinned by sets of policies, discourses and practices whereby consumerist, managerialist, marketised values shape teaching (Smyth and Shacklock, 1998, 135). This results in a structural contradiction, which can only be resolved by removing the orientation towards the economy. When this structural contradiction is resolved and intention to reorient towards sustainability is declared, UNESCO’s (1997a) and Fien’s (2001) recommendations for change will produce greater reorientation towards sustainability. Only by removing the structural orientation to the economy will self-managing schools be able to reorient themselves to sustainability.

\textsuperscript{117} At the time of writing, Brendan Nelson is the Education Minister in the Howard Liberal government, which has approved a series of education policies which are clearly oriented towards economic interests rather than educational quality.

\textsuperscript{118} Unfortunately, this is not a figment of my imagination. Such a vehicle with such a sign, complete with computers, belongs to the university at which I work.
Sustainability can only begin with the people (not the economy) yet there are serious systemic contradictions and tensions by which progress towards sustainability is constrained. These structural contradictions need to be addressed immediately by national, state and local governments. Even within this unsustainable context however, a group of people, through their individual/community maturity and in their openness to on-going learning and transformation, can progress their school-as-community towards sustainability. It is very much easier in a small school than a large school. Human scale schools can implement cooperative strategies without the institutional organisation required of a larger school. However larger schools can devolve further into subsidiary communities for genuine community-based decision-making to be implemented.

Progress towards sustainability depends upon individual and collaborative willingness to engage in learning sustainability – for justice, democracy and ecological viability. Sustainable development in these contexts, requires strong, deliberate commitment, recognising and taking account of the contradictory context and the sometimes painful personal and interpersonal transformation. Constant ends-means dialogue is required, giving attention to and reflecting on the myriad contradictions and paradoxes, together with continual recommitment to ongoing learning. This is a process-based, life-long learning endeavour. In this way, many school communities together can contribute in substantial ways towards the rebuilding of civil society, one that removes the constraints towards a liveable, sustainable future119.

Much has changed since this research project commenced in 1995. We live in a hotter, more toxic, less democratic and increasingly violent world. Although there is less time and more degradation on every scale, paradoxically I feel that there is still hope. It may be that I feel there is hope because of the practical knowledge I have gained by doing this research. I introduced this dissertation with a photograph, which was taken outside the World Economic Forum in Melbourne to symbolise the forces of globalisation against humanity and nature. Below are photographs of some of the ten million people around the world who rallied for peace, breaking previous world records (SBS News,

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119 This research has not considered the power of the media. Given the socio-cultural nature of learning described in this research, and given the extensive amount of television/media consumed by children, I suggest that direct political action is required to address violence and consumption promoted by the media. I suggest this project be taken on in the first instance by the Australian College of Educators and by each state office of the state school teachers’ unions. An example of success in this field is the Australian Medical Association’s project of having cigarette advertising banned. The inclusion of substantially more proactive EFS type programs on commercial stations to the proportion shown on SBS would be helpful.
16/2/03). It seems that a new sense of civil society is emerging, which to me is a huge source of hope.

It was decided at the 57th Session of the UN General Assembly on 20 December, 2002 that there will be an International Decade of Education for Sustainability, from 2005 to 2015. In theory and in practice, the 60 million teachers in the world could bridge the gap towards sustainability, through school-as-community and socio-ecologically contextualised learning.

APPENDIX ONE - RADICAL ECOLOGY AS PHILOSOPHY

Radical ecology forms a philosophical reference for Education for Sustainability (EfS). The main part of the radical ecology section is presented in three broad subsections which are ecological democracy, ecofeminism and deep ecology. Each subsection is a collection of similar perspectives. As I introduce each, I shall indicate why it is used and how it informs the dissertation. At the end of each category or sub-category where relevant, I shall overview critiques from within radical ecology. Merchant (1992) presents the clusters of positions in the field as deep ecology, spiritual ecology, social ecology, green politics, ecofeminism and sustainable development. Bragg (1995, 19) introduces five "distinct but interdependent social movements" which are linked to radical environmental philosophy. These are the greening of religion, ecofeminism, deep ecology, the new science and ecopsychology. Carolyn Merchant says the following of radical ecology:

Radical ecology emerges from a sense of crisis in the industrialised world. It acts on a new perception that the domination of nature entails the domination of human beings along lines of race, class, and gender. Radical ecology confronts the illusion that people are free to exploit nature and to move in society at the expense of others, with a new consciousness of our responsibilities to the rest of nature and to other humans. It seeks a new ethic of the nurture of nature and the nurture of people. It empowers people to make changes in the world consistent with a new social vision and a new ethic.... It pushes social and ecological systems toward new patterns of production, reproduction, and consciousness that will improve the quality of human life and the natural environment... (1992, 1 and 9).

According to Taylor (1995, 540) and Zimmerman (1994, 3) the principle which unites the different radical ecology positions, is the fervent belief in the need to overturn the axial organising principles of modern societies, in particular, modernity's instrumentalist view of nature. Further, radical ecologists believe that limits to resource use must be acknowledged and that human societies adaptive to these conditions must evolve so that human cultures and a healthy biosphere can continue their evolutionary unfolding. While the division is loose, I selected ecological democracy, ecofeminism and deep ecology as category divisions on the basis of the meta-theoretical contribution to education by writers identified with the position. There is significant potential for
cooperation and controversy between the positions at the macro and micro levels. Capra (1997, 6 - 9) also uses these three divisions, but labels my ecological democracy category as social ecology. The categories do not subsume the positions with which they are represented. Further, some of the positions such as Indigenous ecology could equally well be represented with each of the categories. The difficulty is the linear, discrete nature of writing and the representing of a particularly non-linear, multi-dimensional idea. However, this difficulty does not present any obstacle - it merely needs to be acknowledged.

1.1 Ecological Democracy

This subsection outlines indigenous ecology, social ecology and bioregionalism. Ecological democracy defends the local community rather than the state as the primary locus for economic, political and environmental decision-making (Eckersley, T. 1995). Advocates of ecological democracy assert that the basis of the problem with society is neo-liberal economics, which urgently needs to be transformed (Merchant, 1992). Biehl (1991, 131 - 157) claims that a non-hierarchical liberatory community underpinned by participatory democracy in which there is a balance between the personal and the political, is the key to social transformation.

Eckersley (1995) identifies three common threads in ecological democracy. The first common thread locates human communities in the web of life. The second common thread in ecological democracy is that it seeks solutions to ecological problems at the local community level. According to social ecologists, communities should be self-managing. The third common thread in ecological democracy is to obtain consistency between ends and means, believing that central organisations such as the state or political parties may subvert local participatory democracies. The necessity to obtain consistency between means and ends demands an orientation towards the process of achieving the end. The orientation towards process places a heavy emphasis upon the development of the self of the participants. It suggests participants need to develop skills such as cooperative decision-making, non-adversarial conflict resolution and non-egoic participation. These skills arise on an individual basis with the development of a notion of self-as-relation (rather than a separated self).
Bioregionalism and Indigenous Ecology

The essence of bioregionalism is interconnection with one's locality. Bioregionalism is the local management of bioregions, which particularly encourages local watershed comprehension. Bioregional consciousness refers to a complete knowledge of the ecosystem of one's locality, including birds, insects, soils, vegetation and seasonal variations of each of these as well as the topography of the watershed. Bioregionalism asserts that:

political boundaries should follow the contours of distinct regional ecosystem types, and commerce between these regions should be limited, because local self-rule and self-sufficiency make it possible for people to know and responsibly care for their own unique habitats (Taylor, 1995, 540).

Indigenous ecology is oriented towards human-nature integration through a view of the earth as sacred. Indigenous peoples lived and in some places, still live sustainably within their bioregional ecosystems. Various aspects of the ecological democracy movement have been inspired by the life-ways of Indigenous peoples, whose culture is based upon connecting with the earth as a way of life. Indigenous writers such as Forbes (2001) and LaDuke (2000), describe how Indigenous life-ways are the antithesis of non-Indigenous life-ways. According to indigenous writers, the colonisers are responsible for the colonisation, despoiling, and elimination of the life forms of the earth whereas Indigenous peoples learn thankfulness, respect and overwhelming love for mother earth. The animals, rocks, fish and all of the ecosphere are seen as relatives to be cherished and honoured in ceremony. The earth itself is sacred. Forbes writes:

For us, truly, there are no “surroundings”. I can lose my hands and still live. I can lose my legs and still live. I can lose my eyes and still live… But if I lose the air I die. If I lose the sun I die. If I lose the earth I die. If I lose the water I die. If I lose the plants and animals I die. All of these things are more a part of me, more essential to my every breath, than is my so-called body. What is my real body? (2001)

Indigenous groups claim that wrongs of the past are still being committed, these days in the guise of economic and environmental racism. The concept of defending the Earth as a relation is both a way of life and a plea for the radical transformation of individuals, societies and nations. Indigenous ecologists believe that people living in business-as-usual societies need to learn to revere the Earth as indigenous peoples do, thereby
preserving the earth for future generations of humans (Forbes, 2001; LaDuke, 2000). Indigenous people request to be involved in the systematic re-imaging of colonised countries, as is evidenced by the tremendous number of indigenous activist projects which oppose environmental destruction (Indigenous Environmental Network, 2001). Perhaps the most central notion in Indigenous ecology is the spiritual connection of indigenous people with the earth, its forms and life forms. Forbes (2001) writes this as:

…the conception of creation as a living process, resulting in a living universe in which a kinship exists between all things.

**Social Ecology**

Social ecology conceptualises human-scale ecological communities and would orient society towards participatory democracy for human flourishing. Bookchin is one of social ecology's pre-eminent writers. Bookchin emphasises the need to firmly place ecological dislocations with social dislocations and to challenge the vested corporate and political interests of capitalism. He also stresses the need to analyse, investigate and critique hierarchy as a reality and as a way of thinking, and to acknowledge the material needs of the poor and Third World peoples. Finally, he emphasises the need to function politically and to give the human species and mind its due in natural evolution without just regarding humans as a blight on the natural landscape (1991, 61). Bookchin envisions a life-oriented world with a truly ecological future (1991, 78). He says we must muster the courage to entertain radical visions which at first glance appear utopian (1991, 79).

A significant feature of Bookchin's vision, which incorporates human-scaled ecological communities within a context of trees and organic agriculture, is the recovery of personal power over social life which centralised bureaucracies have usurped. He advocates a dual power structure in the transition to a direct grassroots democracy, which would evolve in a cellular fashion from multiple sites. According to Bookchin, in this economic and political context the ecological restoration of the surrounding environment would take firm root (1991, 84). The orientation to life which Bookchin describes recognises the "need for a spiritual connection to the natural world" (1991, 35). The following quotation from Bookchin serves as a compact summary of his contribution to social ecology:
...the radical ecology movement must have programs for removing the oppressions that people suffer even while some of us are primarily focused on the damage this society is inflicting on wild areas and wildlife. We should never lose sight of the fact that the project of human liberation has now become an ecological project, just as, conversely, the project of defending the Earth has also become a social project. (1991, 131)

Critiques of Ecological Democracy

Ecological democracy has been critiqued for being anthropocentric, voluntarist and simplistic, as well as overly optimistic in assuming that recalcitrant humans will meekly cooperate in decentralised participative democracies when centralised power structures are disbanded. Further, the idea that local regions are the best loci for environmental, political and economic decision-making has been criticised for not taking into account parochialism, resource disparities or the need for interregional cooperation. Lastly, some social ecologists have been critiqued for adopting a self-serving idea of nature which is kindly, balanced, cooperative and a source of objective authority (Eckersley, 1995, 194). My response to these critiques is that they do not detract from the essential nature of the position, which is about local decision-making and ecological interconnectedness with the local ecosystem. Any ecosystem within which humans are enmeshed is by definition complex and must take account of a plethora of planning and design principles, which includes the critics' perspectives and much more.

According to Merchant (1992, 153) social ecology is criticised by deep ecologists for its outdated Marxist theory, for its lack of any scientific alternative based on dialectics, and for its lack of an analysis of an ecological or transpersonal self. Spiritual ecologists, according to Merchant (1992, 153) feel that social ecology only addresses economic and material needs, and may even denigrate spiritual needs. An ecofeminist critique of social ecology, is that of failing to incorporate an analysis of socially constructed gender differences and their lack of sufficient attention to environmental ethics (Merchant 1992, 153). My response to the spiritual ecology critique is to point out the need to substantially broaden the position into radical ecology, because defences of each position can only result in a disjointed collection of very narrow, exclusive positions. Each position can integrate with others in such a way as to highlight the essences of each. My response to the deep ecological critics is to point out that it is not significant
that social ecology lacks any aspect, as weaknesses in any position are strengthened by other positions. For example, lack of an analysis of the ecological or transpersonal self is entirely inconsequential since the ecological self is a deep ecological idea which links very well with social ecology in the context of the radical ecology philosophical framework.

1.2 Ecofeminism

Warren describes ecological feminism as:

...an umbrella term which captures a variety of multicultural perspectives on the nature of the connections within social systems of domination between those humans in subdominant or subordinate positions, particularly women, and the domination of nonhuman nature (Warren, 1994a, 1).

"If the final outcome of the present world system is a general threat to life on planet earth", say Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva (1993, 3), "then it is crucial to resuscitate and nurture the impulse and determination to survive, inherent in all living things". Mies and Shiva state that this common concern articulated by women underpins the numerous women-initiated struggles against poisoning, polluting and destruction of our survival base.

According to Warren (1994a) ecofeminists are united in their view that there is a link - historical, political, conceptual and symbolic - between patriarchal domination of women and other social groups, and the domination and exploitation of non-human nature. "The promise of ecofeminism is ... a commitment to struggle to build a community worth living in with all creatures of the earth", says Sawislak (1989, xii). Hallen (1995a, 83) describes the contribution of feminism to ecology in general, as that which addresses the illusion that nature can be successfully dominated. She says that the contribution of feminism to ecology as a science, is that which challenges the assumptions of the mechanical world-view. She also says that the contribution of feminism to ecology as a life science is that which illuminates the 'masculine' nature of modern science and how this has worked to destroy the environment. She claims that in order to transform reform environmentalism (which sees nature instrumentally) into a deep ecology in which one sees and feels oneself as intimately interrelated to nature, ecology as a practice needs feminism. Hallen teaches that:
Unless we incorporate the personal, emotional and sexual dimensions of experience into our explanations, unless our self-understanding is mediated by the scientifically revolutionary perspectives of feminism, we will not make peace with nature (1995a, 83).

A huge variety of perspectives comprise the ecofeminist cluster of positions, including earth-based spirituality and ecofeminist philosophy, as well as social, socialist, cultural and liberal ecofeminism. Below, I write on spiritual ecofeminism and ecofeminist philosophy.

**Spiritual Ecofeminism and Ecofeminist Philosophy**

I shall present spiritual ecofeminism, then I shall present ecofeminist philosophy. The primary concern of spiritual ecofeminism is its primary concern with the transformation of relationships between human and non-human nature. It sees nature as being alive and sacred and it would orient humans towards greater spiritual awareness and integration. Earth-based spirituality, according to Starhawk (1989, 174 - 184) attempts to shift western cultural values towards the cycle of birth, death, regeneration, unfolding processes, creativity and continuous change and away from a worldview which sees competitive, warring opposites. The essence is compassion and the sacred is seen as immanent in the living world, with all things being profoundly interconnected. According to Mies and Shiva (1993, 16) the realisation of the interdependence and interconnectedness of everything is itself sometimes called spirituality. This spiritual realisation, say Mies and Shiva (1993, 16) has underpinned women's opposition to capitalist patriarchal projects involving warrior science and anti-nature ethics. Interest in the mass murder of the witches in the middle ages, together with their knowledge, wisdom and close relationship with nature, has rekindled in women the desire to regenerate the wisdom to assist with the liberation of women and nature from patriarchal destruction. There have been attempts by many women to revive or recreate a Goddess-based religion in which spirituality was defined as the Goddess or the female principle, which inhabited or permeated all things. In the words of Mies and Shiva:

This sensual or sexual spirituality, rather than 'other-worldly' is centred on and thus abolishes the opposition between spirit and matter, transcendence and immanence... The spirit is inherent in everything and particularly our sensuous experience, because we ourselves with our bodies cannot separate the material from the spiritual. The spiritual is the love without which no life can blossom, it is this magic which is contained within everything (1993, 17).
In the context of spiritual ecofeminism, the ecological self comprises one's empowerment. It is that dimension of oneself that opposes fragmentation and participates in the larger reality, and intuitively connects with the deepest levels of interconnectedness and interdependence.

Ecofeminist philosophy analyses hierarchy through the lens of patriarchy. Through the patriarchy lens, relationships of domination and oppression in everyday life can be exposed and critiqued. Ecofeminist philosophy would orient humans towards a focus on relationships of cooperation with each other and with nature. Ecofeminist philosophy, according to Warren (1995, 194) challenges traditional mainstream culture about such issues as what is meant by the term 'nature', what is 'human', what is a healthy relationship between humans and their non-human ecosystems and what counts as knowledge of the non-human world. For ecofeminist philosophers, the notion of the ecological self arises from virtue ethics and is based on a set of commitments inherent in an identity of self-in-relationship to human and nonhuman others. Recognition of both connection and otherness as the basis of interaction are essential aspects of the ecological self, according to this view.

Plumwood (1993, 1 - 2) and other radical theorists see four dimensions of liberation theory - oppressions of gender, class, race and nature. She explains the "logical structure of dualism" as the basis for the interconnections between the different forms of oppression. Plumwood provides an excellent explanation of dualistic relationships which explicates collusion by the oppressed in their own oppression. Her description illuminates Tonnies' uncritical account of the power of the father. Plumwood writes that in relationships constructed as dualisms, the actual or supposed qualities, values, culture and areas of life of the dualised 'other' are methodically and constantly depicted and formed as inferior. This means that the process of domination constructs identity and culture, unless people can use cultural forms of resistance. Without resistance, a cultural group internalises and colludes with the lesser valuation or inferiorisation, enabling the dominant social values to be honoured and maintained. This is how the coloniser gains his values and the colonised gain their values.

A dualism is an intense, established and developed cultural expression of such a hierarchical relationship, constructing central cultural concepts and identities so as to make equality and mutuality literally unthinkable. Dualism is a relation of separation and domination inscribed and
naturalised in culture and characterised by radical exclusion, distancing and opposition between orders constructed as systematically higher and lower, as inferior and superior, as ruler and ruled, which treats the division as part of the natures of beings construed not merely as different but as belonging to radically different orders or kinds, and hence as not open to change. (Plumwood, 1993, 47 - 48)

This process is continually reinforced by denial and backgrounding of the contribution by the other, who is then hyper separated and radically excluded. This means that the motto of the master is, "I am nothing at all like this inferior other" (Plumwood, 1993, 49). Hence the colonialist stresses things that make them different so that the outlooks of the coloniser and the colonised become definitive categories, making them what they are. In this way neither of them, the coloniser or the colonised who colludes, will ever change. By this stage the process has been fully naturalised and is complete.

Critiques of Ecofeminism

Ecofeminism has been critiqued from many perspectives, for a variety of reasons. Douglas Buege (1994, 44 - 46) neatly summarises Biehl's six main criticisms of ecofeminism as: ecofeminists see women and nature are radically counterpoised to western culture; ecofeminists are irrational and anti-rational (referring to earth-based spiritualities); ecofeminists argue that women are closer to nature than men, a form of biological determinism; ecofeminists argue that women are closer to nature than men, a situation which has been socially constructed by men, which is a form of social determinism; ecofeminist theory lacks coherence due to its inherent contradictions; and ecofeminism has not outlined a clear ethic, relying on metaphor instead. Biehl's critique was written in 1991, and in it she called for a "sustained book-length account of ecofeminist theory itself" (1991, 2). Although many creditable papers had already been published by ecofeminist philosophers, their major book-length works did not appear until 1993 (by Plumwood) and 1994a (Warren), which to some extent justifies Biehl's critique. In her work, Biehl (1991, 2) particularly singles out the book by Diamond and Orenstein (1990) as well as the book by Plant (1989). Whilst Biehl's critique is of substance and I agree with her concerns about universalising; sweeping generalisations; and potentially refutable conclusions, it appears that she has not taken the ecofeminist philosophers into account at all even though they had been substantially published at that time. Their works, in my opinion, respond completely to each of her difficulties, and greatly enhance the credibility of ecofeminism as a field with much to contribute to
the radical ecology project. Interestingly, although Plumwood has little time for the spiritual ecofeminists, Warren (1992, 130) provides a defence for each of the varieties of ecofeminism, pointing out the contributions of each (and their right to speak in a diverse, non-generalising context), while seeing the field of ecofeminism as an inclusive whole.

Fox (1989, 16 - 19) critiques ecofeminism (and social ecology) on two main grounds. The first is that simplistic social and political analyses have been used which are "descriptively poor, logically facile" and morally objectionable due to the use of scapegoating and inauthenticity. He describes scapegoating as overinclusiveness, for example, all men, all capitalists and all westerners are seen as being responsible for the problem, when in reality it is subgroups of these categories of people which are responsible. He describes inauthenticity as underinclusiveness, when those who collude with those responsible are not named and therefore are denied responsibility when they have at least partial responsibility. For example, women who purchase animal furs and certain cosmetics are partly responsible for environmental destruction and must not deny responsibility. The second ground for Fox's critique is that some of the perspectives are still anthropocentric, rather than ecocentric. This is evidenced by the emphasis on inter-human relationships rather than the human-non-human relationship. In this case, there is the assumption that if the relationships between humans are put right, then relationships with the non-human world will automatically improve, which he says is not the case.

In my opinion, with qualification, there is some merit in Fox's critique. Firstly, there has certainly been simplistic social and political analyses, and there has been some scapegoating and inauthenticity. There are lessons here for ecofeminists. However, the social and political analyses offered by ecofeminist philosophers such as Plumwood (1993, 1994), Warren (1994b) Zimmerman (1995) and others are comprehensive and offer insights on domination and oppression which should not be dismissed by Fox. Fox's accusations of scapegoating and inauthenticity mask a fundamental denial of the charges which ecofeminists claim are within the social and cultural structure of western society, that is, societies of the north are founded upon a social system of domination. These ecofeminist contributions are particular areas of theoretical strength and offer direction and hope in the field of radical ecology.
Fox's second main ground, that some ecofeminist critiques are still anthropocentric rather than ecocentric, is underpinned by the idea that perspectives are either anthropocentric or ecocentric, and that one (ecocentrism) is good while the other is bad. In my opinion, this whole argument leads to a dead end. In a peopled planet which is bound together with a web of interconnectedness of life, simplified anthropocentric/ecocentric good/bad perspectives only exist at each end of the spectrum of solutions. The majority of the spectrum is the gap between each end. Further, Fox argues using up/down win/lose techniques, rather than cooperative, communicative strategies based on listening and acknowledgment which I suggest adheres to the paradigm of radical ecology.

1.3 Deep Ecology

The deep ecology category includes deep ecology, spiritual ecology, ecopsychology and transpersonal ecology, spiritual ecology and the new science. I shall write about each category.

Deep Ecology

Arne Naess, inspired by Spinoza and Gandhi, was the philosopher who originally coined the term deep ecology to denote the distinction between shallow (reform) environmentalism and the deep, long-range movement. A central tenet in deep ecology, introduced by Naess and elaborated by Naess and others, is that of 'Self Realisation!' or 'the ecological self'. Deep ecologist Bill Devall (1990, 58) stresses that the ecological self is not the small ego minimal self, but the expansive self which identifies with the forests, streams, and wild nature. It is associated with intimate knowledge of place, thereby identifying with it.

The primary reason for environmental destruction, according to deep ecologists, is that of anthropocentric attitudes which view nature as catering only for the needs of humans, rather than being of intrinsic value itself (Taylor, 1995, 540). Drengson applies the deep ecology platform\(^{120}\) to produce a person-planet paradigm, with the following characteristics:

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\(^{120}\) The deep ecology platform principles were written by Arne Naess and George Sessions in 1984, and are as follows:
internal principles of order and the importance of homeostasis and balanced development; context and place; symbiosis and mutual interrelationships, decentralisation, diversity and unity, spontaneity and order, freedom in community; intrinsic value in being itself, biospheric egalitarianism, human experience as value-laden; creative, ecologically compatible design of human activities; collective responsibility and the unique value of individuals; personal knowing, intersubjective experience and diverse consciousness; organisms as wholes which interact with other organisms in spheres of interpenetration; the planet as a whole as a living organism; persons as creative, open, dynamic, developmental, and as co-evolving within larger communities (in Drengson and Inoue 1995, 96).

Critiques of Deep Ecology

Merchant (1992, 102 - 104) describes three categories of critique of deep ecology: its lack of a coherent political critique; its alleged socio-economic and scientific naiveté, and its apparent androcentric bias. Drengson and Inoue refer to a radical left wing of the ecology movement (advocates of ecological democracy and ecofeminists) which has critiqued deep ecology on the basis of a lack of sufficient attention to issues of domination of humans by other humans and of women by men, which is said to be at the roots of the ecological crisis (1995, xxv). Social ecologists critique deep ecology for its focus on the conflict between the ecological and the mechanistic worldviews, whereas socialist ecologists tend to see the environmental crisis as heralding from the dialectic between society (economics particularly) and ecology (Merchant, 1992, 146). In response to feminist critiques of deep ecology, Devall reaffirms that anthropocentrism is the central concern of deep ecology, and calls for an overcoming of the deep ecology/ecofoeminst dichotomy, declaring that "We need each other. We need ... an ethic of caring for the earth" (1990, 57).

Deep ecology has also been critiqued by Fox (1995b, 119 - 145 and 1995a, 165 - 167). He indicates that the deep ecology platform has three limitations, being that there is

1. The well-being and flourishing of human and nonhuman Life on Earth have value in themselves (synonyms: intrinsic value, inherent value). These values are independent of the usefulness of the non-human world for human purposes.
2. Richness and diversity of life forms contribute to the realization of the values and are also values in themselves.
3. Humans have no right to reduce this richness and diversity except to satisfy vital needs.
4. The flourishing of human life and cultures is compatible with a substantial decrease of the human population. The flourishing of nonhuman life requires such a decrease.
5. Present human interference with the nonhuman world is excessive, and the situation is rapidly worsening.
6. Policies must therefore be changed. These policies affect basic economic, technological, and ideological structures. The resulting state of affairs will be deeply different from the present.
7. The ideological change is mainly that of appreciating life quality (dwelling in situations of inherent value) rather than adhering to an increasingly higher standard of living. There will be a profound awareness of the difference between big and great.
8. Those who subscribe to the foregoing points have an obligation directly or indirectly to try to implement the necessary changes.
nothing particularly distinctive about it; that it is not broad enough; and that it is limited in philosophical terms. He also critiques a central tenet, being the idea of asking progressively deeper questions, which in his opinion is simply untenable as people may derive anthropocentric views from their most fundamental assumptions. Because he feels that the deeper questioning emphasis is untenable, but that the ecopsychology emphasis on Self Realisation is distinctive and tenable, he suggests that this unorthodox form of deep ecology be regarded as a post-deep ecology development (Fox, 1995a, 167). According to Fox, deep ecology will probably be regarded primarily as a general ecocentric orientation, rather than a coherently developed ecophilosophical approach.

Brennan (1996) critiqued the deep ecology platform on the basis that each point is highly contestable on the basis of factual evidence. He has also critiqued deep ecology in general on the basis that there is "something profoundly problematic about the motivation for deep ecology"(1996, 11). He finds no particular aspect worth defending, suggesting in conclusion that deep ecology has been a useful stage in the dialectical process. My response to the criticisms is that the critical arena is more of a problem than the critiques. Processes that are quite antithetical to the paradigm of radical ecology are often used. The style of analysis, reduction and decimation used in these critiques is characteristic of a mechanistic, reductionist outlook, which holds that if the problem can be reduced to an ever smaller element it could eventually be eliminated. Ironically, this is the gist of the deep ecology critique of business-as-usual! I believe this style of conflict resolution has little merit in the context of the search for creative solutions to the environment crisis. In this scenario, there is the real possibility that 'the baby could be thrown out with the bathwater'. The reductionist style fails to take into account the essential nature of the whole picture, as the critics often do. In the context of deep ecology, in my opinion, Brennan and other critics have overlooked the essence of deep ecology - its insight into deep and profound interconnectedness, its plea to be open to the possibility of a deeper meaning in the ecocosm.

Ecopsychology and Transpersonal Ecology

Ecopsychology and transpersonal ecology illuminate the realm of the spiritual and inform the research methodology used in this research. Ecopsychology, according to W.
Fox (1995a, 201) connects with ecophilosophy in answering ecophilosophy's basic question, "why care about the world around us?". Fox shows how elaboration of this question leads to a split into two questions, which are: "why should we care about the world around us?" and "why might we be inclined to care about the world around us?". The first question is concerned with ethics and the second is concerned with human motivation - how we are naturally drawn to behave, or psychology. He avers that both aspects are essential. He suggests that until very recently, both psychologists and ecophilosohers have generally ignored ecopsychology and there are only glimmerings that a change may be beginning.

Transpersonal experiences, for Grof and Grof (1995, 178 and 186) are those which reach "far beyond the limits of ordinary human experience", and are often referred to as mystical, spiritual, magical, religious, parapsychological, or paranormal. In transpersonal states, we may transcend the limitations of space, matter and time and experience a strong unitary consciousness, becoming, or identity with humans or non-human beings or elements. These experiences are normally perceived as being quite separate from us, even though the experiences may be very convincing and real. Although exponents of the scientific worldview may be particularly sceptical of the 'sanity' of those experiencing transpersonal states, Grof and Grof have, over a period of more than thirty years, carried out systematic studies of these states and describe them as "extraordinary phenomena that... cannot be explained solely in terms of processes occurring in the human brain" (1995, 188).

Transpersonal ecologist W. Fox (1995b) recognises three general kinds of bases for the experiences of commonality referred to as identification. These are personal, ontological and cosmological bases. According to this view the ecological self derives from ontological and cosmological forms of identification, which tend to lead to lifestyles of voluntary simplicity. Transpersonal ecology builds upon the deep ecology notion of Self-realisation in which there is an expansive, field-like conception of the self wherein care flows naturally to an other as if one is caring for the self. The emphasis is on the nurturing of an ecological consciousness as a trait of human nature. Naess is cited by Fox (1995b, 219) as saying: "the most comprehensive and deep maturing of the human personality guarantees beautiful action". With this realisation of Self, moral 'oughts' to care for other nature are unnecessary since the mature person responds naturally from
the beautiful part of themselves rather than because they are compelled to. Bragg (1995, 4-5) claims that people's behavioural interactions with the world are affected by the way they understand, perceive, make sense or conceptualise themselves and their relationship with the world. Applying this claim, Bragg states:

The present environmental situation, I believe, requires a deeper understanding of contemporary Western society's 'understandings of relationship with nature'. This is where the roots of the problem, and powerful hopes for solutions, lie (1995, 5).

Radical ecologists wholeheartedly support Bragg's statement and would suggest that her statement be broadened to that of "understandings of relationship" per se, including relationships with people as well as nature.

**Spiritual Ecology**

The essential point of spiritual ecology is the call for an individual and collective awakening to a new, very different way of conceiving of and inter-relating with each other and the world. This new way of relating is based on a greater awareness and deeper consciousness of nature and our interbeing. This field of views informs the methodology of this research. Eco-spiritualities, according to Taylor (1995, 204) generally regard nature preservation as a spiritual obligation. Spiritual ecologists call for a spiritual awakening, a re-imagining and re-visioning of the world in such a way that people of the north may empower ourselves to change our destructive ways before it is too late. There are a variety of eco-spiritualities, including: pagan spiritualities, which are linked to the worldviews of primal and indigenous peoples (for example, Starhawk 1989, 174 - 185); eco-spiritualities influenced by religions of the far east, particularly Buddhism and Taoism (for example, Macy, 1989, 1993 and Snyder, 1995); and those arising from a reinterpretation of Christianity (for example, M. Fox, 2000, 1990, 1983 and Kinsley, 1995). Eco-spirituality is often intertwined with other radical ecology positions, particularly deep ecology or ecofeminism. In ecofeminism, eco-spirituality is most commonly in the form of pantheistic religions arising from the centrality of the Goddess, and in deep ecology it seems to be more often associated with Buddhism or Taoism.

Taylor indicates that although the different eco-spiritualities are continually unfolding, several trends are discernible. They generally agree that all reality is interrelated and
metaphysically interdependent. Also, they involve the perception that either nature itself is sacred or has sacramental value for humans, or that nature has some sacred significance for humans. Nhat Hanh's (1995, 11) elaboration of the Buddhist notions of 'looking deeply' and 'interbeing'\(^{121}\) illustrate interdependence. The insight of interbeing is the acknowledgment that there is no separate, individual existence at all. This is because everything is linked and all things are ultimately composed of parts which are 'other'. Spiritual ecologists call for people of the north to awaken to this interdependence, both through their personal power and their collective power. According to Macy this awakening does not occur in monastic solitude, but in the 'real' world of "social, economic and political interaction" (1993, 135).

Spiritual ecologists call for an awakening to each individual's true nature and writers such as Macy have helped to articulate the 'ecological self'. M. Fox and Sheldrake (1996, 180) call for the recovering of "a sense of the sacred". Writers such as Sheldrake and Fox (1996) illustrate the notion of the soul and describe the need for an expansion of the soul (rather than the 'self'). According to spiritual ecologists such as Wilber (1995), Grof and Grof (1995) and McLaughlin and Davidson (1994), the awakening to a new, more expansive awareness of our true nature would ultimately lead to a collective re-valuing of human and nonhuman nature. This aims for, as Fox says, a "global renaissance, a rebirth of civilisation" (1989). Macy comments that "as we work to heal the Earth, the Earth heals us" (1993, xii). Spiritual ecologists point to the interconnection between the cultural loss of spirituality in the western world (which they call a spiritual crisis) and the ecological crisis, and urge people to work towards a reawakening of the spiritual dimension in our lives, for the benefit of the planet.

Critiques of Spiritual Ecology

According to Biehl (cited in Merchant, 1992, 119) when spirituality becomes a political end in itself, it is open to scrutiny, therefore the myths and their functions must be critically examined. Using this justification, the use of eco-spirituality in radical politics, particularly Goddess spirituality and wicca, has been criticised for being ineffective in dealing with the serious ecological problems facing the planet. Critiques have also been based upon doubt that the societies on which the spiritualities were

\(^{121}\) Described earlier in the description of the research paradigm of this dissertation.
based were either harmonious with nature, or peaceful and just (Merchant, 1992, and Biehl, 1991, 29 - 42). Advocates of ecological democracy assert that neither spiritual nor deep ecology goes far enough - that economic transformation is the key to real change (Merchant, 1992). Biehl (1991, 131 - 157) claims that a non-hierarchical liberatory community underpinned by participatory democracy, wherein there is a balance between the personal and the political, is the key. Whilst these critics may have some valid concerns, they often miss the essential point about the call for an individual and collective awakening to a new, very different way of conceiving of and interrelating with each other and the world on the basis of a greater awareness and deeper consciousness of nature and our interbeing. This call cannot be argued away as long as there is an environmental crisis. It is egocentric to say that ecological democracy (or any other single positions) solutions are correct while spiritual solutions are not. Simplistic either/or choices miss an essential point, being the nature of deep interconnectedness. All radical positions help to build a cohesive, strong ecophilosophy and each is weakened without the strengths of the others.

The New Science

New science is used in this dissertation because it articulates the scientific ground for the metaphysics of radical ecology. Matthews (1994a, 48) argues that business-as-usual is:

- a cosmolgically dispossessed culture, a culture clinging to a bankrupt worldview which prescribes a cramped materialistic individualism, the consequences of which we are presently reaping.

There are now innumerable exponents of this view, who call for a radical paradigm shift towards that which is often referred to as the new paradigm (in particular, see Capra, 1983 and 1997). Following Einstein's work in the area of relativity theory and quantum physics, scientists have demonstrated that our world is far different to that described by Newton and many others as a mechanistic, clock-work system. Rather, the following description presents a closer approximation:

The physical universe has come to be viewed as a unified web of paradoxical, statistically determined events in which consciousness and creative intelligence play a critical role. ...the universe is... an infinitely complex interplay of vibratory phenomena of different types and frequencies (Grof and Grof, 1995, 308).

In Matthews' view, because we have accepted science as the basis of our cosmology, any
new worldview needs to be sanctioned by science (1994a, 48).

Bragg (1995, 21) presents key concepts and references in the new science, some of which I have updated. These are general systems theory as described by Bateson (1972) and Macy (1991, 1993); ecology as a way of understanding as described by Shepherd and McKinley (1967); the new physics of Capra (1983 and 1997), Bohm (1988), Kenton (1987), Davies (1987) and Prigogine (1997) which includes quantum physics and relativity theory, holographic universe and the implicate order as well as chaos theory; the new biology of Sheldrake (1985 and 1996) and Sartouris (2000); holographic brain theories of Pribram (1977) and the Gaia hypothesis of Lovelock (1979 and 1988), Thompson (1987), Metzner (1988) and others. All of these writers have elaborated or extended scientific knowledge about the deep interconnectedness of all things. Capra (1997, 288) points out that the experience of reconnecting is the essence of the spiritual grounding of deep ecology. Talbot (1996, 49) cites new scientists, particularly Bohm, in pointing out that ignoring the dynamic interconnectedness of all things is to our peril, both in our lives and in our society. A process philosophy is implicit in the principle of interconnectedness. Bateson (1972) emphasises the primacy of relations and interconnections, as does Macy (1993), Capra (1983, 1997), Mathews (1994a) as well as scientists such as Bohm, Prigogine, Sperry, Sheldrake and others (referred to by Gare, 1993, 122).

The new physics is often cited by spiritual ecologists for affirmation of their convictions, and increasing numbers of scientists are finding that mystical thought provides their theories with relevant philosophical background (Capra, 1983, 67). Talbot (1996, 2) claims that the holographic model of the universe developed by physicist Bohm and neurophysiologist Pribram helps to explain and make sense of virtually all spiritual and mystical experiences. Interestingly, I have seen little criticism of 'new science' notions per se within transdisciplinary environmental philosophy literature. As pointed out by Mathews (1994a), because our society is still underpinned by science, radical ecology writers, especially deep ecologists, would be wise to refer their work on notions of the self and relations with nature to quantum science and complex systems modelling where these matters are now long established.
APPENDIX TWO - REPORT TO RIVERDALE SCHOOL BOARD

This is the report from the Cooperative Inquiry Group to the Board of Riverdale School. It has been placed here to support chapter seven. The cooperative inquiry report which comprises section two of chapter seven is a report of the group’s work. It is the initiating researcher’s report. The report below is the report of the group’s work:

______________________________________________________________________

Report From The Holistic Education Group, on Participative Decision-making

8 June, 1996

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1.0 Introduction

Six two-hour meetings have been held by a group from the Riverdale School. Twenty three people have been involved in the group, with most meetings having approximately fifteen people in attendance. These meetings have used a cooperative inquiry process to investigate the implementation of Participatory Decision-making to the school community. It is hoped that an acceptance of this report, and implementation of its recommendations, will contribute towards a more effective implementation of this aspect of the school policy. The objective which has underpinned the group's discussion, has been the development of a unified, cohesive, cooperative, participative and functional school community which will be able to achieve the school policy aims.

This report presents a rationale which, in the opinion of the group, needs to underpin the decision-making structures and processes of the school. The rationale is followed by the research background, and a discussion of the main topics addressed. A discussion on the future of Cooperative Inquiry Groups in the school follows, and the report is concluded with a summary and recommendations to the community of the school.

The discussion and recommendations carry no intended implicit (or explicit) criticism of any person or group at the school. The report was written to reflect the discoveries and collective wisdom of the research group. This report flows from a 'spirit of cooperation'. Associated with the 'spirit of cooperation' is an emerging and tangible feeling of Riverdale School community, unity, belonging and acceptance, on which we base our faith and hope for the future of the school. Behind this report, is a sincere appreciation of the school, especially the work being carried out by teachers and parents. There is an acknowledgment that we have something very special and unique here at the school.
2.0 Rationale

The group considers that this rationale needs to underpin the school's decision-making processes:

| Decision-making Processes at Riverdale School are consultative and participatory; are based on the school ethos, principles and values; and include parents, teachers and students. Day to day implementation of those decisions is the responsibility of the particular co-ordinators, with the aim of supporting and empowering each and every individual. |

3.0 Background and Research Method

The Cooperative Inquiry Group was originally the initiative of a post-graduate research student. It was formed to investigate the application of the school policy, and has the support of the Riverdale School Board. The group used an innovative social research process which aims to bring research, social action and education together. Our experience demonstrates that personal development and community building should be added to the list. In the cooperative inquiry process, participants are considered to be co-researchers and co-subjects. Reason (1992, 1) describes cooperative inquiry as:

...a way of doing research in which all of those involved contribute to both the creative thinking that goes into the enterprise, deciding what is to be looked at, the methods of inquiry and making sense of what is found out, and also contribute to the action which is the subject of the research.

4.0 Elaboration of Discussion Topics

This section presents an overview of the direction of the discussion, and recommendations arising. Cooperation is the theme that links the topics together. The section is structured so that basic principles such as cooperation and communication are introduced first, followed by a description of the conditions through which participatory processes (which depend upon cooperation and communication) may be effected. Finally, application of the principles to community development, and empowerment of individuals as a function of our community, is presented. To conclude the section, the question of the relevance of current decision-making structures to our present needs is presented.
1 Group Dynamics Based on Cooperation

As cooperation is considered by the group to be essential to our school community, our findings on cooperative group dynamics are detailed first. The group attempted to maintain a cooperative 'state of mind' in discussions. It was discovered that a spirit of cooperation influenced attitudes and feelings of the meetings. In a cooperative state, people were fully attentive, and there was congruence of ideas. Participants felt safety in the group, which was conducive to empowerment and collective wisdom. There was palpable, peaceful energy in the room, and the outcomes were felt to be intuitive and resourceful. Participants realised, however, that there is a place for adversarial discussion, as it encourages daring, and it is enlightening: it is an exercise of the mind. It was accepted that adversarial positions may be taken in cooperative inquiry groups, however, it is important that the spirit of cooperation set the tone and conditions of safety first.

Participants discovered that without the spirit of cooperation, an adversarial conversation may suspend the ability to reason, with pressure to respond to the moment; a loss of ego; and a strong need to defend the position. There was a need to compartmentalise the mind (rather than thinking 'whole'). Adversarial conversation without a spirit of cooperation can be accompanied by frustration, feelings of inadequacy, emotional draining, loss of face, disempowerment, exclusion, non-listening, point-scoring, responsive reflex actions, little room for shift in position, little time for reflection, and sometimes, fear and hostility. It is important to recognise that the group has not discounted adversarial positions or processes, but wishes to emphasise that the tone of the meeting be set by a spirit of cooperation.

It was felt that the cooperative spirit underlies the idea of effective community. The group sees the need for the cooperative spirit, for an atmosphere of cooperation and mutual support, to prevail at the school. It was accepted that skills in cooperative discussion need to be learned by individuals, and continuously worked at to obtain personal growth in this area.
The Synergy of the Group

The group aimed to obtain a synergy, which was described by a participant as follows:

When two or more people have a serious discussion in harmony and with good will, the unique product of that group is a special creative energy. It's more than the combination of ideas. It's a new and different creation, an extra measure of intelligence. That new creation is greater than the sum of its parts, and can enable a group of ordinary people to come up with big, genius-sized ideas.

At all times, the group aimed for synergy in discussion. It is felt that synergy most easily arises from a spirit of cooperation.

Recommendation

- That each year, each new Riverdale School adult member attend a course offered by the school's training consultancy on cooperative versus adversarial discussion and decision-making processes (or a cooperative inquiry group), with the idea that cooperative decision-making is prerequisite to the effective development of a sense of community.

2 Communication

The group frequently discussed communication, which, it is felt, is probably the most significant issue in our school. In these initial months of the school, communication was seen by participants as a key area needing improvement. Often, participants have found that decisions were made which they had no knowledge about, before or even after. Further, for a variety of reasons, participants often did not have a clear idea of activities, items required, teaching themes or routines in their children's classes. Participants expressed the need to be more closely involved with their children's education, but sometimes felt frustrated because they were not clear on what they could do. In addition, it is likely that insufficient communication (verbal and/or written) is a major contributor to feelings of disconnectedness and disempowerment.

Recommendations

- That there be at least one formalised whole-class parent-teacher meeting per term, preferably with the first being held in the second week of term.
- That there be one day per week which is formalised for parents to make after-school
appointments with their child's teacher for personal discussion.

- That writers of newsletter items be asked to provide more complete descriptions of their topics, together with the necessary background, to enable a clear picture to be available to parents hearing of the event/issue for the first time.
- That dates of meetings be published at the commencement of the term, and agenda items be published several days before a meeting.

(Also see recommendation 4.3.1 below.)

3 Conditions Prerequisite to Participatory Decision-making Processes

Participatory Decision-making is associated with the following conditions, in the experience of the group:

- everyone to feel safe enough to express their feelings
- Everyone who wishes so, to have their opinion considered
- Everyone to be continuously aware of, and sensitive to those who are being silenced or disempowered
- The process is continuously discussed and re-negotiated according to the particular needs of the topic/situation. Different processes will reflect different needs. For example, processes may include cooperative brainstorming, round robin, not-round robin, regular discussion, directed discussion, debate, voting and many more
- Agreed upon ground rules (in the case of the meetings which are in accordance with constitutional requirements, the ground rules consist of the set meetings procedures which are in use)
- There is a prevailing sense of humour, warmth, encouragement, support and respect
- Participatory decision-making takes time. Take it!

Recommendations

- That meeting convenors ensure that the above conditions be provided at all school meetings.
- That mechanisms be implemented to ensure that everyone, including those who may not be able to attend specific meetings, has had ample opportunity to present their opinion for consideration. These mechanisms may include surveys and the calling for written submissions.
4 Community building and inclusivity in decision-making

The group often saw itself as addressing some of the wider issues of community development. The discussion frequently aimed to devise personal and group strategies to include others in both the decision-making aspects of the school and the community life of the school. Emphasis was given to responsibility of the individuals in the development of the school community. The following ideas were put forward:

- each group member will undertake to meet and talk with other parents they do not know well, to "get to know them better", and perhaps invite them to a school gathering to which they may not have attended otherwise.
- Each group member will attempt to personally invite and assist two other parents to attend general meetings and other specific purpose meetings.

Group members observed that, towards the end of term 1 and some of term 2, numbers of parents seemed to be 'marginalising' themselves from the life of the school community. While marginalised, parents' views and services are unavailable to the school community, likewise, they cannot receive community support and the warm, shared feeling of cooperative ownership and belonging that many of us feel. Similarly, the school objective of a link between home and school is less likely to be achieved. The group proposed explanations for the marginalisation, which were:

- some parents had wanted to be involved, but for various reasons they had 'given up'. For example, some had experienced confusion at arriving at school to find some disorganisation, and consequently feeling 'useless'. (This is a 'school start up' teething problem. It was considered that time and better organisation will address this category of reasons.)
- Some single parents sometimes choose not to attend night time functions such as meetings, because of the inability to pay a baby-sitter, whilst not wishing their children to stay up late on a school night.
- Lack of personal skills and empowerment.
- Not feeling 'heard'.

Community building and inclusivity was continuously discussed and acted on, with personal invitations being made. A number of participants attending the cooperative group felt that the topics and processes used by the group were assisting them to
become more personally empowered, through an increased confidence to bring about the changes in their own lives or styles of working.

Recommendations

- A 'Suggestion Support Group' be available for people who wish to be assisted while they investigate the feasibility of their idea, and if their idea is cleared, to assist with the implementation of their idea. This will assist people to feel 'heard'.
- Baby-sitters be provided for each school function to which parents are expected to attend, such as general meetings and parent-teacher formalised meetings.
- Co-ordinators and others requesting parent assistance be responsible for making sure the task required of the assistant/s is clearly articulated, with materials required being at hand. Assistants need to be advised of their expected time of arrival so that time is available for instruction/advice before children arrive or other 'business' demands time.
- That all Riverdale School parent members consider themselves a significant part of the school, and attempt to attend each relevant function organised, and to invite and encourage others to attend.
- That all routinely occurring occasions be on a set day of the week/term, in order to facilitate the development of a sense of comfort through predictability and 'history'. For example, perhaps the last Sunday of each school holiday and the middle Sunday of each term could be a big busy bee and barbecue, the second and sixth Saturday of each school term could be a general meeting, and so on. (Likewise, perhaps we could routinely celebrate seasonal occurrences: the first day of spring, the equinoxes or the solstices, etc.)

5 Cooperative versus adversarial discussion as a basis for community:

The prevailing view of the participants, is that cooperative discussion is learned, and requires significant personal commitment before it becomes a part of one's life and being. Two participants expressed the following sentiments:

I thought it was such a shame that we have to call it a cooperative inquiry before I develop the attitude of listening and cooperating. Why can't we do that all the time? That's just me. That's where I have my growth to do. Cooperative inquiry is the way to move ahead. If, through this group, each of us develops the habit of listening, encouraging, learning, then this group will do well - the attitude will grow. I see it (cooperative talk) as
drawing community, the whole ethos that we developed. It's just so uplifting, whereas the confrontational discussion is destroying.

While decision-making, in other groups as well, just simply expressing views is not enough. We need to have an open attitude of continuous learning. An important purpose of having meetings, is to learn to participate. Considerable attention was given to the concept of community. This group made many references to the need to develop a harmonious, cooperative community, underpinned by a unity of commitment. It is clear that appropriate community skills are learned only in the context of community. Therefore, especially in our first year, many people are learning to be 'community members', often for the first time. The following working definition is proposed for our use of the term 'community', on the basis of the group's discussion:

Our community is committed to the ethos, principles and values that underlie the Riverdale Community School. This is the essence of our unity. Our members' individuality is expressed in the different ways in which the ethos, principles and values are interpreted and implemented. This expression is cooperative, and is executed through the school's participatory decision-making structures (see the rationale). Our community, then, encourages and expects a diversity of opinion, which is continually being negotiated through cooperative discussion, compromise, appropriate conflict resolution, and the resultant personal and community acceptance of, and commitment to, all decisions.

Recommendation
- That each Riverdale School member recognise that everyone is learning about participative decision-making and community, and that we be supportive, patient and encouraging, realising that everyone requires time, patience and acceptance.

6 Personal Empowerment Within Our Community

One participant suggested:

Every project needs knowledge, volition and action. We need to know where we want to go, and have that will to achieve, then the action to carry it out.

This idea underpins the sentiments expressed on personal empowerment in a community context. The group acknowledges that some members of our school community are more empowered in decision-making than others, for a variety of reasons, including the following:
• a sense of the history of the school, having been involved in the early development of the school and its policy.
• A placement in a formalised decision-making structure of the school, such as the board.

Accordingly, it has heard and seen the need to assist others to become more empowered to include themselves in the decision-making structures of the school. To this end, participants suggest that some individuals need invitation, inclusion and encouragement on a personal basis (already discussed) and on a systemic basis (see recommendation 4.4.1 a. above on Suggestion-Support Group).

7 Participatory Decision-making Structures

It was frequently suggested that the decision-making structures of the school may need to be investigated to ascertain whether they act to assist participatory decision-making, and whether constitutional changes could be made to further facilitate and institutionalise participatory decision-making processes. It is possible that decision-making structures currently in place have served their purpose in the 'start-up' of the new school, and that now, in line with the implementation of our policies, more innovative structures may be called for.

Recommendation
• That a working group be set up to make recommendations for change to the constitution, so that participative decision-making structures (as well as processes) may be institutionalised.

5.0 Future: Role of Cooperative Inquiry Groups in the Context of the School Board.

The group was asked to consider where it would like to be positioned in the decision-making structure of the school. The group does not see itself primarily as a decision-making group, however, it has developed cooperative processes and gained considerable wisdom about community inclusiveness in participative decision-making. Therefore, it is suggesting a role for the process, together with the notion of 'forming and reforming groups'.
Firstly, the cooperative process. The group considers that cooperative discussion is a skill that is learned. It requires an attitude of respect for the other: of consciously and openly listening and hearing the other view, and responding with sincerity and care.

Recommendation:

- That all decision-making in the school be undertaken in a spirit of cooperation (rather than adversity). Education and personal commitment is required to implement this recommendation.
- Secondly, that the notion of 'forming and reforming cooperative inquiry groups' be accepted.
- That 'forming and reforming cooperative inquiry groups' be short term and focused, and would research school policy: either policy creation or policy implementation.
- That cooperative inquiry groups operate with the authority and status of a Riverdale School working group.

6.0 Summary and Recommendations to the Chairperson of Riverdale School

This report has presented an overview of the processes and outcomes of the Cooperative Inquiry Group, which investigated the application of Participatory Decision-making to Riverdale School. The group spent considerable time developing cooperative discussion processes, and considers that a spirit of cooperation is essential to our development as a community. Also, it considers that effective communication is a prerequisite to community cohesiveness and inclusiveness. Participatory decision-making, which is based upon a spirit of cooperation and effective communication, is imperative as it is associated with community members feeling connected and empowered, and having a sense of belonging. The following compiled and summarised recommendations are put forward to the Chairperson of Riverdale School (not in order of priority):

- That each year, new Riverdale School adult members attend a course on cooperative decision-making processes (or a cooperative inquiry group). (4.1.1)
- That there be at least one formalised parent-teacher meeting per term. (4.2.1.1)
• That there be one day per week which is formalised for parents to make after-school appointments with their child's teacher for personal discussion. (4.2.1.1)

• That dates of significant meetings (such as Board, General Meetings or Parent-Teacher formalised meetings) be published preferably at the commencement of the term or as soon as they are known, and agenda items for those meetings be published in the newsletter prior to the meeting. (4.2.1.1)

• That meeting convenors (co-ordinators, working party convenors or interest group facilitators) take a copy of the Conditions Associated With Participative Decision-making (detailed in 4.3 above) and agree to ensure that prerequisite conditions for participatory decision-making have been provided at all school meetings (4.3.1)

• That each and every General Meeting agenda that is published in newsletters carry the sub-heading: "This school emphasises Participatory Decision-making. Accordingly, you are strongly encouraged to attend this meeting. If you can not attend you may advise the Chairperson, in writing, of your view on particular agenda items. Written submissions will be read to the meeting." (4.3.1)

• That formation of a 'Suggestion Support Group' be approved, to support people who wish to be assisted while they investigate the feasibility of an idea, and if their idea is cleared, to assist with the implementation of their idea. (4.4.1)

• That child-care givers be provided for each school function to which parents are expected to attend, such as general meetings and parent-teacher formalised meetings. (4.4.1)

• That co-ordinators and others requesting assistance be asked in writing to ensure the task required of the assistant/s is clearly articulated. (4.4.1)

• That all routinely occurring occasions such as busy bees and general meetings be on a set day of the week/term, in order to facilitate the development of a sense of predicability. (For example, the last Sunday of each school holiday will be a busy bee) (4.4.1)
• Recommendation: that a working group be set up to determine whether changes to the constitution should be recommended.

• That writers of newsletter items be asked to provide descriptions of their topics giving detail of at least the following: When, Where, How, Background and Purpose. (4.2.1.1)

• That future cooperative inquiry groups be short term and focused, and be used to research school policy: either policy creation or policy implementation. (5.2)

• That cooperative inquiry groups operate with the authority and status of a working group. (5.2.1)

• The following additional recommendations are put forward to individual adult members of Riverdale School in a newsletter item reporting on the Participatory Decision-making Cooperative Inquiry group outcomes.

• That all Riverdale School parent members attempt to attend each relevant function organised, and invite and encourage others to attend.

• That each Riverdale School member recognise that everyone is learning about participative decision-making and community, and accordingly, requires time, patience and acceptance. (4.5.1)

• That all decision-making in the school be undertaken in a spirit of cooperation. (5.1)

References Used

APPENDIX THREE – RIVERDALE SCHOOL DOCUMENT

This document was sent to Riverdale School members who inquired about the cooperative inquiry research invitation. There is personal information about myself which includes my personal philosophy, loosely framed research questions and a plan for the first meeting. I also sent an overview of cooperative inquiry which comprised a photocopy of the introduction from Reason, P. (ed.) (1988). *Human inquiry in action: Developments in new paradigm research*. Sage Publications Ltd., London, U.K.

Riverdale School
Sandra Wooltorton · RMB 258 Boyanup W.A. 6237 · Telephone 08 97 958242

Dear

The cooperative inquiry group
Thank you for your interest in the cooperative inquiry group, which will have its first meeting Saturday 16 March at 10.00am, at the school. Child-care will be available, please bring fruit for the children.

I am quite sure that the group will become integral to the development of our community, and to the implementation of our philosophy. In this letter, I'll tell you a little about my reason for calling this group together, and a little about our potential as a cooperative inquiry group.

My bias
Firstly, I'll declare my bias 'upfront'. I have always been a 'greenie', a lover of life, nature and people, and I've always had a concern for the future of the world. This concern was stepped up in my early 20's particularly, when, as a young graduate teacher, I studied anthropology and 'open education' for the first time. I seriously questioned most of the assumptions that our modern lifestyle is based on, and as the eternal optimist, decided way back then that I would always try, in my own way, to make the world a better place to be. I have always made my life decisions, including voluntary and professional employment as well as non-employment, on that basis. As a result, I have done most of the 'alternative' things that people 'who question almost everything' do: I've lived in beautiful, wild, remote places with and without mains power; travelled far and wide (with spouse, and later, spouse and two small kids); taken part in many a political rally or protest in support of some social justice/peace/environment issue; joined various intentionally subversive groups and political parties; and helped to start a holistic/ecological school (!) I've also spent a great amount of my teaching career working with Aboriginal people, and exploring problems and alternatives in education, and it has been with Aboriginal people that I think I have learned the most about life, nature and people. There are two particularly critical incidents in my life which I would say produced a permanent impact, which softened
my tough exterior and which fuelled my determination to help to 'change the world'. They were the births of Liam and Ben. The birth of a child makes many people re-evaluate their place and values in the world. Hence, my involvement in the Bunbury Community School, and my postgraduate studies. My readings about the state of the world and the interrelationship of domination/violence/environmental destruction/poverty, have made me realise that it's almost, but not yet too late to produce meaningful change. And so...my bias? It's that I want to change the world, and make it a more ecologically sustainable place to be, for our children, and our children's children. The title of my thesis, is: "Environmental Ethics, Education and Eco-Social Change". On the basis of my readings, I feel that the only way to change the world, is to change ourselves. And that's pretty hard to do alone: I am sure that the most productive, caring, nurturing way to change ourselves, is through supportive community action. My research is about producing eco-social change, through the community of a school. And of course, if you haven't already realised, when we do it, other schools are going to want to do it too, because news of good things spreads fast. The excited chatter at one of the Stratham bus stops yesterday morning was that one of the parents had heard our school being talked about by John Laws. (Okay, who did it? It definitely wasn't me! So - we're getting to be famous already.)

**Our Values Base**

So I have given you my bias. I also know that my sentiments are shared by many of the parents at the school. Most of us are of the same heart. At times for me, it's overwhelmingly wonderful to hear other people's stories, and I feel a great empathy and attachment with them. Most of us, I find, regularly do things for the environment in one way or other, such as regularly cleaning up other people's litter at the beach or participating in local environmental action; and most of us choose to forego some material delight so that we can spend more meaningful time with our kids, and of course some of us go to great lengths to be able to afford to send our kids to our school.

**The first meeting**

So not only have I revealed my heart and stated my bias, I hope that I have also provided a place to start on our first day. Perhaps we might start by telling our stories about why/how we came to be involved with the school, and what we individually hope to achieve through it. Also, we might like to come up with a series of questions that we may address, perhaps one or two each time we meet (but we will be continuously renegotiating what we do and how we do it!)

**A (beginning, tentative) plan for our group:**

Some questions, may be:

- What have we done/are we doing that's great? (Let's face it, we've done a remarkable, wonderful thing. We've given birth to both a community and a school. We can really allow ourselves to feel great about that, and pick out all the things we are doing well and blow our trumpets loud!)

- What is holistic education? (or ecological/creative/new paradigm/whatever we want to call it/education) .....Wait a minute...do we know what 'education' is? Crikey, what is that thing?

- Do we have holistic (or ecological/creative/new paradigm/whatever we want to call
it) education? Do we need to transform ourselves or our community? If yes, in what way? How do we do it?)

• Can we come up with a holistic (or ecological/creative/new paradigm/whatever we want to call it) model for education? (I'm really, really, really interested in this one, as it is the subject of my thesis. I don't mind if we change all of the other questions, or add a million more, but I'll be negotiating hard to keep this question!)

• When we have done all that, let's describe and label it properly. What sort of education is it? Holistic, ecological, creative.... or is there another (better) word?

I'd better not write any more. I hope you now understand a little about the idea behind cooperative inquiry groups, and can understand the enormous transformative potential we have in our own hands/lives! I have enclosed some extras which you may have time to read, about the state of the world, about community, education, and finally, in case you are interested, some background about cooperative inquiry as a research process.

Cheers

Sandra Wooltorton
APPENDIX FOUR - VALIDITY AND RADICAL INQUIRY SKILLS

This appendix comprises a report on the ethnography and cooperative inquiry validity procedures used in this research. It supports the ethnographic research which forms section two of chapter six, and the cooperative inquiry report which forms section two of chapters seven and eight. This appendix also describes the radical inquiry skills used in the cooperative inquiry research.

4.1 Validity in Ethnography

The place and role of ethnography as a research method has been scrutinised and critiqued in recent years (Hastrup and Hervik, 1994, 3). I shall use the work of Hastrup and Hervik (1994) and Hervik (1994) to incorporate ethnography into the paradigm which underpins this dissertation. For the sake of brevity, I shall provide a short account. Two considerations are discussed in this subsection. The first consideration is that ethnographic research does not have the integrity of an action research method such as cooperative inquiry because ethnography does not honour three key principles, which I shall discuss shortly. This weakness is addressed by the design of this dissertation, which enables the propositional knowledge generated by the ethnographic research with Forest School to be affirmed as externally valid by the practical knowledge produced during the following cooperative inquiry at Riverdale School. Secondly and most importantly, ethnographic research can produce reliable, comprehensive and substantial propositional knowledge if it adheres to procedures which ensure it is sound and well grounded. Critical intersubjectivity is an important methodological consideration which provides propositional validity. I shall describe these two considerations in turn, below.

I support the view that generally, single researcher ethnographic research does not have the integrity of cooperative inquiry because it does not adhere to three key principles. The first principle is that there should be full political participation by the people being researched in the design and production of the research122. The second principle is that

122 Heron (1996, 20, 21) states that people have the human right to participate in the production of decisions, including research decisions, that affect and concern them. This is to avoid disempowerment, misrepresentation or oppression by the researcher’s values or power.
there should be full epistemic participation\(^{123}\) by the researcher in the production of the knowledge. The third principle is that there should be cycling of knowledge from belief to practice\(^{124}\). Therefore, the knowledge generated by the ethnographic research in this dissertation cannot have the integrity of cooperative inquiry. Having stated this, there is still a role for ethnography. There are three important reasons which justify the use of ethnographic research in this research.

I use ethnographic research because it can produce substantial, clear, high quality propositional knowledge using validity processes underpinned by critical subjectivity and critical intersubjectivity. I also use the method because the field of ethnography has adjusted its approach, its orientation and its practices in response to postmodernist criticism about political and epistemic involvement and about representation (Hastrup and Hervik, 1994, 2, 3). Most significantly, I use ethnography because it is a method which is based upon recognition of the authority and embedded knowledge of a different culture. In the case of this dissertation, it recognises the embedded, embodied wisdom of a unique school community. Stories and story telling are traditionally part of human society and theorists such as Abram (1996, 270) suggest that our society has forgotten the poise of "living in storied relation". Ethnography is a research method that enables the researcher to respectfully engage in storied relation with the wise, through the learning techniques of observation (being-with), asking questions and receiving advice. 'I', the reflective practitioner, needed an outer arc of attention. I needed to listen, hear, feel, see, be-with and 'immerse-in' a transformative culture that already existed before my involvement. I needed to get a 'sense' of a transformative culture prior to beginning to construct one through the cooperative inquiry. Ethnography suited the purpose particularly well. This reason is my main justification for incorporating ethnography.

I shall present the case that ethnographic research can produce rich, descriptive, lucid, erudite information. Ethnographic research can open a window to 'see' processes, practices and worldviews, which may otherwise have been unavailable to the

\(^{123}\) This means that the researcher needs to participate in the research as a subject as well as a researcher, so that the propositional knowledge which is derived is based in the researcher’s own experience. In this way, the researcher can be convinced of its truth on the basis of deep participative knowing.

\(^{124}\) The repeated cycling of knowledge through the stages of experiential, presentational, propositional and practical beliefs ensures that the resulting knowledge is well grounded in experience. That is, the process links primary and secondary meanings and importantly, ensures a high degree of validity because it uses two or three of Wilber’s ‘eyes’ or modes of knowing in order to avoid category error.
researcher. Ethnographic research produces a story, a version of history. It is a version of history, as interpreted and reported by the researcher through a reflexive process of storying (Hastrup and Hervik, 1994, 10). Because the perceived and the perceiver are linked in a participative relation, the creation of the story necessarily includes the researcher (Heron, 1996, 116, Abram, 1996, 57). Hastrup and Hervik stress the importance of fieldwork as participant observation and say that physical presence is essential to gain access to lived experience (1994, 3). Because much of the relevant information is non-verbal, Hastrup and Hervik stress the importance of experience, rather than dialogue as the starting point for the route to anthropological knowledge. I understand this to mean ‘being-with’ and ‘doing-with’ as well as talking-with. The fieldwork and experience orientation addresses to some extent the problem of category error arising from lack of cycling of knowledge. Good, substantial fieldwork ensures that experience is the base of the propositional knowledge, which is the outcome of the research. To some extent, it also addresses the limitation of the lack of epistemic participation by the researcher, in that there is some experiential participation.

The shared reasoning process is underpinned by an “inherently reflexive relationship between the world studied, and the students of the world”, that is, between the research participants and the researcher (Hastrup and Hervik, 1994, 4). In this sense the process of storying, the meaning-making, is the learning moment. Reflexivity is a practice that describes and constitutes a social setting at the same time (Hervik, 1994, 94). I understand reflexivity to be a metacognitive activity which shares reflection about the reflection of the combination of the practices, discourses, stories, accounts and vicarious experiences. To some extent, the dialogical reflexive process addresses the criticism of lack of political participation in the research. The relation between researcher and researched is a democratic one, in which the meaning is negotiated and agreed. Hastrup and Hervik write that cultural complexities are often regularities and may be reflected in thematics which are embodied in action rather than being primarily linguistic (1994, 6). According to Hervik, reflexivity and categorisation arise together: not as a result of reflexivity and language in themselves, but as a consequence of the embodied prototypes and cultural models. Categorisation is an ordering device for both inner understanding and social interaction. Categories might be applied for real-world experience,

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125 It does not address the political issue of representation, however.
or in pre-supposed, simplified worlds, but once established their significance and adequacy are reflected upon. (1994, 97)

The reflexive dialogue is the basis of the critical intersubjectivity, which underpins the validity of the outcomes. Techniques underpinned by critical intersubjectivity are important to ensure the reliability of the story. These include multiple interviews and discussions, so that information from one source can be verified with other sources so that the researcher can ensure that there is consensus about the story (Yin, 1994, 92).

The storytellers themselves are extremely important as their claim to knowledge is significant to the validity of the ethnographic knowledge, which results. From the knowledge perspective of Heron (1996) and Wilber (1996) it is important that the storytellers possess practical knowledge on the basis of their own cycling of experience with reflection over an extended period of time in the research community. In the end when the ethnography is written, the story is never final. It is one version of a story, part of a larger, emerging story which is always in the process of being created. Its validity rests upon the claim to knowledge by the storytellers and the intersubjective agreement between the storytellers' accounts. The validity also rests on the integrity and political sensitivity of the researcher, as well as her skills of critical subjectivity including being present (empathic communion, mindfulness), imaginal openness (co-participating with ‘other’ to intuit meanings) and bracketing (disregarding tacit conceptualising as it arises: putting beliefs to the side while listening and being with the ‘other’).

### 4.2 Radical Inquiry Skills

This is a glossary of Heron’s radical inquiry skills, which is included to support section 2.3.3, on the methodology of the research. Heron writes that the development of "radical inquiry skills" is important for cooperative inquiries, (1996, 115-130) however I contend that the skills are a requirement of the transformative inquiry field. He lists informative inquiry skills as radical perception (being present and imaginally open), some varieties of bracketing, reframing and Buddhist practices to maintain and enhance a reframing, reflective mind. In addition to these, transformative inquiries require the radical practice of dynamic congruence, emotional competence, non-attachment and self-transcending intentionality. Further researcher skills include skill in articulating
values and extraordinary consciousness. To support the descriptions of the skills I provide some Engaged Buddhism examples, using the work of Nhat Hanh (1995 and 1991).

Heron (1996, 115) regards the radical inquiry skills as the seat of data generation. Firstly, I shall show the difference between informative and transformative inquiries. Informative inquiries produce propositional knowledge about the inquiry topic, or information about the topic. Transformative inquiries on the other hand, inquire into practice and are transformative of some aspect of practice. Heron (1996, 36) writes that there are four kinds of outcomes of cooperative inquiries, being experiential, presentational, propositional and practical. Generally, only the practical knowledge as outcome is transformative. The postconceptual world, that born of deliberate and continuous regeneration of conceptual meanings (and hence a world) as a result of deep experiences of the primary, primordial level, is facilitated by skills which are listed below. Below I introduce extraordinary heed, then I describe the skills using the headings of informative or transformative inquiry skills. Skills listed as informative inquiry skills are also used in transformative inquiries and transformative inquiries need extra skills as well.

4.2.1 Extraordinary Perceptual Heed and Extraordinary Practical Heed

For informative or transformative inquiries into the human condition we need to pay extraordinary perceptual heed. Heron writes that through the ascription of categories of language and concepts that occurs routinely through our everyday language use, perception can be routinised. That is, it can create the illusion that subject and object are separate. In effect, according to Heron (1996, 117) this is akin to sleepwalking. This means that we need to awaken from dreaming and participate in empathic communion with other beings126 (Heron, 1996, 117). Heron (1996, 115) describes memory as the primary form of data generation and any record is a secondary form. Hence, perception and memory co-originate simultaneously. ‘Heed’ simply means paying careful attention, however paying heed in an extraordinary way requires attention to the nature of perception. Because of the class names that accompany the use of language, language itself has the potential to obscure perception of the unitary, participatory nature of

126 I interpret this to mean sentient and non-sentient beings, that is, plants and animals as well as people.
primary meaning by routinising the perceiving process. Within this context the taking of ordinary heed occurs. The extraordinary level of heed occurs through ‘waking up’ from the restrictions of language and paying heed to the participatory process of perception itself (Heron, 1996, 116).

They can notice how the mind through perceptual imaging is engaged in creative enactment and shaping of the world and its beings. They can sense how this is inseparable from empathic communion with these beings: this means a felt harmonic resonance with their inner presence, with their mode of consciousness, the way they are affected by their world. (Heron, 1996, 116)

Full, embodied sensing of and engagement with the world, as articulated by Abram (1996, 65) is necessary. Thus, by enhancing our capacities to perceive together with the generated memory, we can intuit about the patterning of entities in our world, about the form of interconnections and about their habit of awareness and sensibility. Thus, the process of extraordinary perceptual heed enables access to the tacit, intersubjective level of primary meaning, noticing and accessing it as the context of language. Heron (1996, 117) writes that extraordinary perceptual heed is also referred to by the various spiritual disciplines as mindfulness, self-remembering or wakefulness, the purpose of which is to arouse us from the ‘unawareness’ of normal consciousness. The following quote from Buddhist Nhat Hanh, about mindfulness, illustrates extraordinary perceptual heed.

In Buddhism, our effort is to practice mindfulness in each moment – to know what is going on within and all around us. When the Buddha was asked, “Sir, what do you and your monks practice?” he replied, “We sit, we walk, and we eat.” The questioner continued, “But sir, everyone sits, walks, and eats,” and the Buddha told him, “When we sit, we know we are sitting. When we walk, we know we are walking. When we eat, we know we are eating.” Most of the time, we are lost in the past or carried away by future projects and concerns. When we are mindful, touching deeply the present moment, we can see and listen deeply, and the fruits are always understanding, acceptance, love, and the desire to relieve suffering and bring joy. When our beautiful child comes up to us and smiles, we are completely there for her. (1995, 14)

Heron maintains that for transformative inquiries we also need to pay extraordinary practical heed. This means that we need to pay heed at a more visionary and inclusive level to understand the action as a whole and to recognise the total meaning of what we are doing while we are doing it. Nhat Hanh speaks of engaged mindfulness which is the basis of engaged Buddhism. The following quote illustrates my understanding of
extraordinary practical heed:

We must be aware of the real problems of the world. Then, with mindfulness, we will know what to do and what not to do to be of help. If we maintain awareness of our breathing and continue to practice smiling, even in difficult situations, many people, animals and plants will benefit from our way of doing things. Are you massaging our Mother Earth every time your foot touches her? Are you planting seeds of joy and peace? I try to do exactly that with every step, and I know that our Mother Earth is most appreciative. Peace is every step. (1991, 91)

4.2.2 Informative and Transformative Skills

I detail four further skills for informative inquiries which are: being present, imaginal openness, bracketing and reframing. I shall elaborate them below.

*Being Present*

Being present is the “empathic communion, harmonic resonance, attunement” with the presence of human and more than human others (Heron, 1996, 119). It is the co-participation with their inner experience, the in-dwelling of their unique declaration through the shared conceptualising of primary meaning. Being present exists behind the partition of language with the immediacy of unhindered perception (Heron, 1996, 119).

To illustrate my interpretation of this, I add this quote from Nhat Hanh:

Our true home is in the present moment. The miracle is not to walk on water. The miracle is to walk on the green earth in the present moment. Peace is all around us - in the world and in nature – and within us – in our bodies and our spirits. Once we learn to touch this peace, we will be healed and transformed. (1995, 23)

*Imaginal Openness*

Imaginal openness is the co-participating in the manifest patterns of the ‘other’ and intuiting their meanings, that is unrestricted simultaneous sensory and subtle perception. These two complementary aspects of extraordinary perception enable participative empathy as the seat of the creative shaping of all modalities and states of a world. They enable a pure acquaintance with phenomena unmediated by language or propositions, that is, the world of primary meaning of unrestrained perception and consciousness of deep webs of connections. (Conceptual or secondary meaning, is that connected to language, ordered by fixed terms and classes.) Nhat Hanh writes:
When we want to understand something, we cannot just sit outside and observe it. We have to enter deeply into it and be one with it in order to really understand. If we want to understand a person, we have to feel his feelings, suffer his sufferings, and enjoy his joy. (1995, 100)

**Bracketing**

There are several varieties of bracketing which are useful to facilitate radical perception. Essentially, bracketing is the ‘disregarding’ of our tacit conceptualisation of experience arising from linguistic forms. This means putting our belief system and cultural worldview to the side because it causes us to ‘see’ and interpret in our customary way. When we bring these beliefs into clear vision and are explicit about them, we can become fully aware of their impact so that we can look around them to regenerate our vision to fully see, perceive and comprehend what exists. Similarly, childhood conditioning and trauma needs to be divested because it can distort perception very badly. Finally, the framework chosen for the inquiry also needs to be bracketed off to look clearly at the scene. The framework lens will need to be donned occasionally throughout the inquiry to focus and critique progress.

**Reframing**

Reframing consummates the skills of bracketing and comprises the creating of alternative frameworks, at different times and as required, to determine the contextual ‘fit’. It is the self-reflexive mind capacity which can attend to and build upon its own regenerative processes. It is the mind capacity that is able to grasp multiple perspectives and hold them, open and transparent to all of its contexts, continuously transcending each in the striving towards a new structure of consciousness, which would ultimately contribute to a new planetary awareness (Heron, 1996, 122). The skills already mentioned are helpful for description and explanation of reality (informative inquiries). The following four skills are useful for informative inquiries and are also useful for transformative inquiries, which are those that research and transform practices.
4.2.3 Skills for Transformative Inquiries

Just as many of our everyday perceptions are unreflective and ‘constrained’ by linguistic categories, so are many of our everyday practices. Because we do not pay much heed to them, we do not remember their execution, particularly. However, we can transform our actions by paying heed to them in an extraordinary way, comprehending the meaning as a whole as we are carrying them out. An action, as a whole, connects the person to their world. By being intentionally aware of the motives of the action, the goals, values, strategies and norms, the contexts, the beliefs and the effects, while the action is being implemented, we can notice whether the manifold aspects of the action are compatible. Paying heed to practices in this extraordinary way is a dynamic process which can modify any of the incompatible aspects where there is incongruence (Heron, 1996, 118). I list five skills for transformative inquiries, which are: the radical practice of dynamic congruence, emotional competence, non-attachment, self-transcending intentionality and the articulation of values. I shall delineate each below.

The Radical practice of Dynamic Congruence

Radical practice is that of paying extraordinary heed to the operation of actions. The practice of dynamic congruence attends to all of the elements of an action such as purpose, motivation, goals, implementation and outcomes, to notice their congruence or lack thereof. It is able to reshape the actions to reduce the dissonance and enhance the congruence between the elements. It suggests the asking of critical questions such as: does the purpose, strategy and outcome fit with the underlying values? Is this power-sharing a valid part of our practice? Is this power sharing actually genuine sharing of power? Heron (1996, 123, 124) states that this practice is at the interface of the intuitive-imaginal mind and the reflective, conceptual mind. I suggest that it also interfaces with the sensory-experiential mind, enabling Wilber's three eyes to engage. Heron says of radical practical heed:

… it is reflection-in-action itself subsumed and enlivened by an intuitive, imaginal grasp of the of the whole pattern of the action in its intentional, behavioural, social and environmental dimensions (Heron, 1996, 124)

Heron notes that the ordinary mind requires some preparation and training. For the transformative researcher this is likely to be the first transformative step, as it was for me.
**Emotional Competence**

As well as congruence in the elements of an action, as described above, elements of one's own emotional state must also be congruent with the action. Emotional competence, or emotional intelligence, is the capacity to remain aware of one’s emotional state, to identify, own and accept it through self awareness, so that one can manage it on this basis, by expression, transmutation, control or catharsis. Emotional competence suggests that every authentic decision is a sort of emotional expression, proceeding from personal preference which presupposes that the person engaging in autonomous action is aware of the emotional value of his preference among the options available. Heron (1996, 125) explains that distress-driven, inappropriately adapted behaviour removes the possibility of acting with awareness and intentionality. The inquiring person and group require the skills of emotional identification and management, including the processing of repressed pain, spotting and interrupting the tendency of residual emotional pain from distorting current behaviour. Other emotional skills include maintaining or regenerating creative, purposeful action when emotionally distorting tendencies are activated, as well as spotting and supportively confronting distorting tendencies in others in ways that are enabling for them.

**Non-Attachment**

Non-attachment in radical practice, is akin to bracketing in radical perception. This is the ability to be unattached to the parameters of the action, not imbuing the act with one’s emotional identity, but remaining fully committed to the action. In this way, the actor can figuratively breathe freely and suggest other options at each point. The Dalai Lama says that, "attachment has the negative effect of clouding and narrowing your vision" (2000, 51). He refers to the necessity to develop a sense of equanimity, which is the habit of relating to all others equally. He says, "to do this, we need to address the problem of having thoughts and emotions that fluctuate" (2000, 46, 47).

**Self-Transcending Intentionality**

Whilst dynamic congruence functions inside the existing parameters of action, self-transcending intentionality is the simultaneous ability to hold different sets of parameters, to envision ample practical substitutes during action so that the action and
circumstances can be reshaped according to one's principles as applicable to the situation. It is underpinned by non-attachment so that during action, a selection of optional purposes, strategies, forms of behaviour and motives are available to substitute as required (Heron, 1996, 126).

The Articulation of Values

Heron also writes about the importance of being able to articulate values. He writes: “Intrinsic values provide the ultimate human ratio, or guiding reason, of action. They are autonomous; they stand on their own epistemological ground…”(1996, 126). I entirely agree. However, on the basis of my new ‘practical’ awareness of practical knowledge, I believe that closely held values and principles only provide the guiding reason of action when they are congruent with people’s actions and some form of action research facilitates this. People who have not implemented some form of action research may believe that particular values guide their actions, but closer reflection may reveal practices commensurate with vastly different values. Therefore, I think that the articulation of values in the context of one’s actions is extremely important and has the potential to catalyse the search for transformative practices.

In addition to this list of skills, from my experience the requisite skills for informative and transformative human inquiry also comprise considerable facilitative competence. Facilitation alone is a complex of interrelated skills and competences (see Heron, 1989). In addition, I found that a ‘brazen openness’ with others about one's position as a learner and willingness to take risks and make mistakes is a handy skill. Rather than striving to learn all of these skills before entering the inquiry, the skills can be learned and practised during the inquiry. Heron states that whilst the list of skills might seem daunting, "the discipline of engaging in a cooperative inquiry and its cyclic process is itself a means of developing them" (1996, 115).

This appendix has described skills and practices that employ our own behaviours, feelings and thoughts to gain a source of insight into the whole, which is possible because of the holographic insight of the whole through the part. As well as gaining insight, the implementation of these practices is actually transformative practice. For example, by developing the skill of extraordinary perception and by paying
extraordinary heed to the process of action to ensure dynamic congruence, we are incorporating a new level of sensitivity and awareness, opening wide windows for renewal and transformation, individually and collectively. This array of skills and practices is the basis of critical subjectivity, so that the methodology can manage its own rigour. The enhanced consciousness is the ground for the critical subjectivity and frames the paradigm described above. Critical intersubjectivity is underscored by the validity process of the methods. For example, in cooperative inquiry participants are regularly expected to take the role of devil’s advocate to ensure that consensus collusion with inappropriate beliefs are not occurring (Heron, 1996, 152, 154).

4.3 Validity in the Cooperative Inquiry Research with Riverdale School

My understanding of cooperative inquiry validity, is as a praxis informed by an intertwining and intersubjective connectedness of knowing and being. I accept the precepts outlined by Heron (1996, 57) which outlines cooperative inquiry outcomes as valid if:

They are well-grounded in the forms of knowing which support them. … forms of knowing are valid if they are well-grounded in the procedures adopted to free them from distortion, and in the special skills involved in the knowing process. The validity of each form of knowing also depends on how sound it is in the light of standards internal to it, of autonomous criteria at its own level.

Heron provides a simple representation of the congruence of the forms of knowing, which I have reproduced here:

The cycling between these forms of knowing as the foundation of the cooperative inquiry process provides the grounding for the validity of the inquiry. There is thus, the grounding of a particular form of knowing in that which is already known in a different and precedent form, as well as the consummation of the form of knowing by the emergent form in the following stage, thus fulfilling, manifesting and celebrating the being-values. The celebration of the being-values, the apex of the process … is about emancipated social practice, and radiates the intrinsic value of human flourishing. In this sense, congruent knowing is more than truth and validity - it is affirmation by action of our deeply held values. (1996, 58)
4.3.1 Validity and forms of knowing

In Heron's model, validity is underpinned by a pyramid\textsuperscript{127} of forms of knowing. In this model of validity, experience forms the ground for presentational knowing about its images and patterns and presentational knowing forms the ground for propositional knowing, which is expressed as intellectual statements that are conceptually organised according to rules such as logic and evidence. Practical knowing is the 'knowing how to' which can only be possible with experience of the 'how to' as well as the imaging of the patterns in the 'how to' (the presentational) together with the conceptualising of the propositions about the 'how to'. Validity is underpinned by knowing rather than belief. In Heron's model, belief precedes knowing (1996, 52). Belief is a "mere arbitrariness of mind" with plausibility on the basis of a warrant of some kind. Knowing has a much stronger warrant, on the basis of a well-founded claim. Experiential and presentational knowing together form the basis for propositions, all of which form the ground for intentional action, being the practical knowing. In this model, practical knowing is the focal point and the epitome, but ungrounded without the mediation of the subordinate autonomous forms. Experiential knowing is grounded in participation in the present through resonance, attunement and empathy. It is having "participative compresence" with it. (Heron, 1996, 54). On the other hand, experiential belief is the first inchoate affirmations of resonance, or tentative, conditional involvement.

With this framework, the co-inquirers cyclically integrate all four modes of knowing in an arrangement of behaviours that are congruent and concerted. Integration is the necessary condition of the continuation of the cycling. (Heron, 1996, 165). This process has the capacity to produce truth as the congruent articulation of reality (Heron, 1996, 163). Accordingly, stage one of the cooperative inquiry cycle involves propositions and presentations about a topic and propositional and presentational beliefs regarding what may be of benefit to inquire into. This is what the Riverdale group called process talk. Stage two of the cycle, the first action phase, involves being fully present and aware for informative inquiries and dynamic congruence among all aspects of the practice for transformative inquiries. This is what the Riverdale group called agenda talk. At Riverdale, this comprised the early parts of the group agenda discussion, which tended

\textsuperscript{127} The problem with the image of a pyramid is that it is hierarchical, linear and too simple, nonetheless it serves the purpose for this research.
to be a putting forward of a variety of views, often polemic in nature. Stage three is simply a deeper immersion in the action. For Riverdale, it was the overcoming of the polemics through the dialectic process, the finding of the middle way or the consensus path, usually liberating and in effect, transformative. Stage three, according to Heron (1996, 54) is typically experiential beliefs, being the pre-cursor to experiential knowing. Heron's stage four is the second reflection stage which makes sense of the information and transformation processed in the action phases, being stages two and three. Thus, there is integration of the presentational and propositional and in the case of Riverdale, now comprising pooled information, enabling propositions grounded in shared experience. In an Apollonian inquiry this would lead into a second inquiry cycle, entering a new stage one, the planning of the next action phase. In a more Dionysian inquiry which was the case at Riverdale, the stages and cycles were not clearly defined. This is what Heron describes as letting the logic of the method emerge tacitly, by cycle to cycle infusion. As will be described in more detail later in this section, the Riverdale group would simply enter a reflection stage if the action stage was becoming difficult, to clarify the difficulty. This may have been a reversion to the first reflection stage to clarify what we had intended to do, or a jump over the second action stage to the second reflection stage to analyse what we had done and on the basis of this, directly enter a new stage one in a new cycle.

In hindsight, in my opinion the initial question, that of coming up with Riverdale's model of holistic education, was too big for the detail about information and for the actual transformation which the group wished to discover and implement in such a comparatively short time. When the group broke the research question down into the implementation of participative decision-making first, and then peacefulness second, effectively two different cooperative inquiry questions evolved. The first, that of participative decision-making, was cycled very effectively at least five times, each time with increasing depth, more fully formed propositions and later, on the basis of practical knowing and finally, a deeper practical knowing. Heron states:

…experiential and reflective forms of knowing progressively refine each other, through two-way negative and positive feedback. (1996, 60)

With regard to research cycling, the positive clarifies, refines, deepens and extends the inquiry focus, whether it be transformative or informative, whilst the negative amends, checks, corrects and deletes what the co-researchers find ill-grounded about their work.
(Heron, 1996, 51). This effective cycling, through two way negative and positive feedback, was definitely the case with the work on participative decision-making, but not the case with the peacefulness inquiry. Thus, the validity of the participative decision-making section of the Riverdale inquiry is high, whereas the peacefulness section is less valid, as it was less formed and cycled. For this reason, the group's report on the implementation of participative decision-making was valid, since the peacefulness question was investigated after the Participative Decision-making report was prepared.

4.3.2 Validity procedures

The balance between convergence and divergence

These form part of the logic of the method. There is convergence within the action phases, as well as between the action phases, and likewise with divergence. Convergence within an action phase means that subgroups or individuals each investigate the same characteristic or portion of the inquiry subject matter, whereas convergence between action phases means they investigate the same aspect in the next action phase. Likewise, divergence within an action phase means that individuals or subgroups each investigate different aspects of the inquiry topic, whereas divergence between action phases means they investigate different aspects in the next action phase. Again, due to the Riverdale group being more Dionysian, the group was not intentional in convergence and divergence, however in my opinion, in hindsight, there was certainly a good balance between them in meetings one to six (excluding the peacefulness topic).

Below I have described the polemic discussions emerging in the first action phases of meeting two, evolving into convergence through addressing the divergences. These divergences were mild in these early cycles, and explicated without particular efforts to resolve them. I detail later in this section, that they were part of the pooling of information. In effect, they were part of the 'sketching out' of the various aspects of the whole topic for later deeper discussion. Meeting three was intentionally divergent, setting up opposing fields of experience for analysis, that of adversarial conversation versus cooperative conversation. Each pole was fully discussed, before the group
attempted a working together of the two sides. There were seen to be aspects of adversarial conversation that were undesirable in a setting intended to produce truth values, for example the competitive need to win, resulting in the felt need to defend one's own view at all costs, irrespective of any objective resemblance to truth. However, there were aspects that were felt to be valuable, such as the deliberate searching for creative and alternative explanations to those that may already have been agreed upon. In this way, a melding together of desirable aspects of adversarial conversation within a cooperative framework was the convergent result. Meeting four included a further cycling of divergences that were first framed in meeting two, articulating and explaining the divergent aspects. It comprised a good balance of convergence and divergence within the action phase, with a deeper and broader investigation of several aspects arising from the adversarial conversation topic, and then arriving at understanding about the implications for this in practice.

Meeting five comprised an expression of disillusionment with the Riverdale status quo, followed by an articulation of the various aspects of that disillusionment. The general tone was more convergent than divergent, in that there was a tacit agreement about the various aspects produced as divergences in meeting two and four. Meeting six, the final in the participative decision-making series, was primarily convergent, in that there was little disagreement about the nature of the situation being discussed or the model produced for decision-making in the school. Further, discussion was contextualised in a realistic way to the nature of the self, and how individuals can work to better themselves and their school through warmth and nurturing of self, children, teachers and other parents. Meeting seven was effectively the first cycle of a new inquiry, produced only a pooling of information, the sketching out of the whole topic. In this dissertation, I do not draw any data or explanations from that meeting.

**Challenging uncritical subjectivity**

Heron describes this simply as the authority upon any group member to act as devil's advocate at any point in time. The Riverdale group did not deliberately discuss this, however, the role was regularly assumed by various group members. In my opinion, more than half of the group felt sufficient comfort to assertively challenge both
individuals and the whole group about statements or agreements, which they felt were out of order or preposterous.

**Chaos and order**

This topic is addressed in more detail in chapter seven, in the section titled: The Story of Inquiry Initiation, and Initiating Researcher Non-Dependency. It was difficult to endure chaos sometimes, because there was a particular awareness about the constructive use of time, with children being cared for outside and people having very busy lives. In my opinion, the group secured a reasonable balance between chaos and order, recognising that out of chaos emerges some of the creative insights that would not otherwise have been reached. This was clearly the case in meeting three, the Crossingtown workshop, when the discussion 'descended' into an adversarial conversation between two people (others having progressively left!) This was retrieved magnificently by the warm, caring and nurturing cooperative conversation the following morning, during and after which time the adversarial versus cooperative polemic was worked into a useful form. The workshop was informative, transformative and illuminating and effectively became the base for the participative decision-making model.

**Authentic collaboration**

In chapter seven, in the section titled: The Story of Inquiry Initiation, and Initiating Researcher Non-Dependency, I write about the Riverdale ownership of this inquiry project. The group saw the need for the research to improve conditions at the school and took responsibility for this as soon as possible. As initiating researcher, my opinion is that I under-facilitated rather than over-facilitated, particularly in the earlier stages when considerable facilitation was required. In my mind, there is no doubt at all that the participants were not simply acquiescing with my direction or views.

I have less certainty about whether individuals in the group had more influence than others, perhaps due to their energy and enterprise, or whether there were influence hierarchies in that the views of some held more sway than the views of others. We regularly discussed the need for inclusivity and fair participation, and we employed ways of making participation equitable through the use of rounds, speaking implements (with which the holder may speak without being interjected as long as the implement is
being held). We did not discuss the balance of influence, however, and at this stage, I have no way of establishing whether influence was balanced. It cannot be detected through the transcripts, and I have no memory of concern about any person having more influence. We certainly had no ‘passengers’ - there was no-one who, other than in week one, did not present a view or participate with willingness. There were people who had previously thought deeply about the issues at hand, and others for whom this inquiry was the first consideration. For people who had not previously considered the issues, the first few meetings in particular comprised a deep learning experience. These people may have been more tenuous in their assertions and therefore less convincing of their argument. Overall, unfortunately I cannot establish with certainty that no-one had more influence than others.

*Variegated replication*

This element is concerned with the thoroughness and clarity with which the design and outcomes are portrayed, so that future inquirers can recreate the inquiry, and extend their understanding of it as well as their engagement within it. According to Heron (1996, 156) "the initial perspective, research design and practical content will be recognizable and thoroughly reworked", but there will be sufficient common characteristics for the follow-up to be a genuine progression of the original. Section 7.2 of chapter seven, together with the report that comprises the group's primary outcome which comprises Appendix Two, achieves variegated replicability.

*Concerted action*

The question here, according to Heron (1996, 157) is about whether group members' actions interweave and dovetail, in a concerted and coherent way, so that they agree their knowing is practical, and has sustainable value. This question is really very wide, concerning both the interweaving and dovetailing of the group process, and the agreement of practical knowing which reinforces and is a logical conclusion of the appropriate procedure. The answer to this question is a definite affirmative, in several senses. In the sense of this inquiry as informative, then considerable information about the co-researchers' contexts and perspectives was derived through concerted cycling and weaving. The written report to the official school decision-making group evidences their
agreement about practical knowing. In the sense of this inquiry as transformative, then the evidence comprises the way they interwove and dovetailed their conversations and deliberately applied their cooperative strategies, in a determined way to be different to the adversarial processes seen to be used in other decision-making contexts. Within the transcripts of the meetings, there are regular references to the intention to develop their model of holistic education through practice of it, as well as tacit agreement to proceed with this action through its continuation. Heron writes that even if the propositional outcomes for an informative inquiry can be legitimately claimed to be valid, it is still in one sense incomplete due to the fact that "practice consummates the inquiry process with the celebration of being-values" (1996, 157). There is no doubt in my mind, as co-researcher with practical knowledge of this process, that the process itself was a significant factor in this strong affirmation of concerted action. I have written more about this in the section on An Account of the Outcomes of the Inquiry in chapter seven.

Open and closed boundaries

This was a closed boundary inquiry, which is quite reasonable in this inquiry due to the fact that the data is about the group themselves. There was no interpretation of the action of others required. Heron (1996, 156) states that if others are represented without their direct involvement, then a basic norm of cooperative inquiry is breached. However in hindsight, in my opinion the group could potentially have been more effective in changing the decision-making processes and structures of the school, which became their intention during the meetings, if other key personnel in the school had participated. This could not have been anticipated before the meetings began, because the precise direction the group would take was still to be decided by the group.

Methodological Difficulties and Issues

I outline the problems I experienced initiating cooperative inquiry research, without practical knowledge of cooperative inquiry, in section 2.13 below, on 'The Story of Inquiry Initiation and the Move Away From Dependency on the Initiating Researcher'. In terms of the cooperative inquiry as a whole, in hindsight, these problems were
comparatively minor, other than my discomfort. Also from experience, I have learned that the initial research question needs to be manageable, taking into consideration the length of time the group will commit themselves to in advance. A bigger problem is the political setting of the cooperative inquiry group in the overall research context. The very existence of cooperative inquiry groups is predicate upon the development of a sense of safety in the group, of the ability to communicate one's innermost feelings and responses without fear of betrayal or ridicule. Cooperative inquiry groups depend upon the development of a deep sense of trust in each other. Thus, group members have the potential to develop a sense of closeness with each other, a mutual understanding and deep respect underpinned by cyclic practice.

In the case of Riverdale School, there were many small and large school committees operating within the same period of time, which is the reason that an even greater proportion\textsuperscript{128} of the school population could not participate in the group. However, the kind of communicative relationships developed by the cooperative inquiry group members, together with the nature of the topic being discussed, apparently led to a feeling of exclusion and jealously by one or two others not in the group. We had agreed to be professional in our discussions about school procedures, so that the procedure rather than a person was discussed. In my opinion we were fastidious about this.

Unfortunately however, some people felt singled out and spoken about by the group. Our group had agreed that no names would ever appear in the transcripts, and all participants would be able to remain anonymous even through reference to events, which would be altered during transcript preparation, to maintain confidentiality of group participants. This meant that no names, not even pseudonyms, could be used. If an event was modified in the transcript to protect anonymity, the transcript preparer stated this. In the transcripts, verbal contributions were simply indicated with a bullet point at the start. In this way, other school members would always be able to study the transcripts should they choose to. Consequently, the potential was there for non-participants to feel spoken about, which unfortunately and very sadly, apparently led to feelings of jealousy, bitterness and resentment by a couple of key school participants. The group regularly and persuasively invited these members to participate, and did not, at any point, decide that non members could not join, or come along later in the
development of the group, but non-participants may have felt excluded because of the warmth that developed in the group. Within any organisational or small community context, when some people elect not to participate in cooperative inquiry, the potential for feeling excluded needs to be clearly explained at the outset, and taken into account at all stages during the process. From our experience, I suggest that cooperative inquiry generates so much transformative energy, knowledge and skill, that it is worth giving it an extremely high priority for the whole school community. It should be planned for long in advance, and carried out at a time when other community development activities are in recession.

A further, and perhaps more obvious point for inquiries with transformative goals, in an organisational or small community context, is that the potential for cultural transformation of the organisation or community is reduced proportionately when a decreasing number of people participate, since change happens through practical knowing. In other words, people can only change themselves. They cannot tell others about their enlightenment and expect them to change, unless the others know how, on the basis of practical knowing.

128 Between one third and one half of the families of the school were represented in the cooperative inquiry group.
APPENDIX FIVE - ORGANISATIONAL TRANSFORMATION CHART

This chart is by Edges (1997) and cited in Stanfield (2000). It is placed here because of its very clear outline for organisational transformation. It is referred to in chapter seven, in relation to the transformation from hierarchical relationships to those of cooperation. The chart maps a possible progression of transformation of organisations from hierarchical structures to cooperative, learning structures.

Plate 3: Progress map for transformation of an organisation from hierarchical to a cooperative, learning organisation.
This dichotomy was used in the planning session of the Forest School cooperative inquiry group, in preparation for the four research meetings to follow. Its inclusion here is to support the cooperative inquiry group report which forms part of the second section in chapter seven.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ecological Orientation</th>
<th>Business-As-Usual Orientation</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quality of life</td>
<td>Standard of living</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperation</td>
<td>Competition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community-interest</td>
<td>Self-interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holism</td>
<td>Reductionism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple provision of needs</td>
<td>Acquisition - property, things</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecological, social interest</td>
<td>Interest in efficiency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative</td>
<td>Dominative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality orientation</td>
<td>Money orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energy conservation</td>
<td>High energy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community transport</td>
<td>Individual transport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fulfilment/transcendence</td>
<td>Class or status conscious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peace</td>
<td>Truce in conflict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural environment</td>
<td>Ordered environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synergy</td>
<td>Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decentristm/Ecocentrism</td>
<td>Anthropocentrism</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ecodemocracy</td>
<td>Patriarchy</td>
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<td>Integration</td>
<td>Compartmentalisation</td>
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<td>With</td>
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<td>Monistic</td>
<td>Dualistic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Permaculture</td>
<td>Agribusiness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intuitive</td>
<td>Rational, scientific</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relax, calm</td>
<td>Speed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecological self</td>
<td>Egocentric, assertive self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mysticism</td>
<td>Fundamentalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsiveness</td>
<td>Rule orientation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Communitarianism</td>
<td>Individualism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process orientation</td>
<td>Product orientation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5. Simple Illustration of Contradiction Between Business-As-Usual and Ecological Perspectives
APPENDIX SEVEN - FIVE PERSPECTIVES ON THE SELF AND FIVE PERSPECTIVES ON THE ECOLOGICAL SELF

7.1 Five Perspectives on the Self

These perspectives on the self are placed here to support the general description of the self which is provided at the start of chapter eight. The five differing perspectives on the nature of the self which are a symbolic interactionist view, a Jungian view, a transpersonal view, a Buddhist view and a phenomenological view.

**A Symbolic Interactionist View**

Mead (Giddens, 1989, 72) describes the development of self-awareness in children as the distinguishing of the 'me' from the 'I' with the 'I' being the bundle of unsocialised desires and wants and the 'me' being the 'social self', seeing oneself through the eyes of others. George Ritzer describes Mead's symbolic interactionist view as follows:

> The *self* is basically the ability to take oneself as an object; the self has the peculiar ability to be both subject and object. ...The self presupposes a social process: communication among humans. ... The self arises with development and through social activity and social relationships ... The self is dialectically related to the mind. ... the body is not a self and becomes a self only when a mind has developed.... it is impossible to separate mind and self. (1992, 341, italics given)

Ritzer comments that Mead saw the self as a mental process however all mental processes in Mead's theoretical system are social processes (1992, 341). The contributions of this field of views is personal responsibility and the role and locus of the body in human perception and communication.

**A Jungian View**

Bernie Neville (1989) uses Jung and Greek mythology in naming and describing self in relation to psyche/soul. He refers to Jung's personal psyche and objective psyche with the personal psyche being the total personality comprising ego, persona, shadow and anima/animus, together with the self as the organising centre. The objective psyche in this description is the psychic energy field, the patterns of drive, emotion and image
known as archetypes or gods in Greek mythology. Reality in this description, is something constantly being individually created. According to Neville, "Everything we can say about life, truth or consciousness is an 'as if' (1989, 8)". Neville cites Jung, "every psychic process is an image and an imagining" (1989, 9). I have used Neville's work in this context because of his wide, encompassing view of the wholeness of the person as creator through imagination, balance of all polar opposites and relationship.

**A Transpersonal/Spiritual View**

Lucinda Vardey's view on the self is transpersonal/spiritual:

The Self is our higher being, composed of the divinity that stirs within us -- our individual and unique soul and the purpose of its role in our lives and the lives of others. It manifests itself subtly in our bodies, which is often called the causal body of our being, and in our minds as the consciousness of our being. (1995, 134)

Heron's view is also underpinned by transpersonal psychology. He says that personhood is a differentiated centre of consciousness within a cosmic presence, a:

particular focus of development within the field of universal consciousness, unfolding a unique perspective within it, with people emerging through the progressive differentiation of the person from germinal to transfigured states. In reality, there is no separation between any conscious centre and its setting in universal mind... (1992, 10)

Wilber describes the self as a system which is the navigator of one's development of consciousness. He says it is the climber of the ladder of actualisation, the seer, the "navigator of development" (Wilber, 1996, 83 -99, 276). Wilber asserts that the self can choose to identify with any level of consciousness up to the level of the highest structure that has emerged but it may feel pulled by choices in other directions.

**A Buddhist View**

Varela, Thompson and Rosch (1993) in using a Buddhist approach to consider the relation between cognitive science and human experience, suggest that cognition can proceed without a notion of a separated self. They call upon the experience of mindfulness/awareness meditators in proposing that people who appear self interested as opposed to other-interested are struggling confusedly to maintain the sense of a separate self, "by engaging in self-referential relationships with the other" (1993, 247). The experiences of mindfulness/awareness students, according to Varela et al., lead
them to recognise that there is no self in any of their experience, enabling self-interest to be replaced by interest in others. Compassionate actions therefore, have the ultimate effect of removing all egocentric habits so that the practitioner can realise the wisdom state. According to Varela et al., this path of mindfulness and open learning are profoundly transformative with the ultimate goal of becoming embodied out of compassion for the world, rather than through habit, struggle and sense of self (1993, 252). The Buddhist practice of mindfulness/awareness enables the arising of a sense of groundlessness, of decentredness, of responsive, compassionate concern and the recognition that one is one's own actions, experiences and practices.

**A Phenomenological View**

Phenomenologist and existentialist Martin Heidegger has an ontological, substantival view of the self as being, as existence (Honderich, 1995, 346). It exists not as an isolated subject but is with others from the start. He distinguishes between the 'they-self' and the 'authentic self'. The authentic self is 'self that has itself in its own grip' compared to the 'they-self' where others have usurped its being. Phenomenologist and existentialist Merleau-Ponty defined the world as "the field of experience in which I find myself" and reworked Descartes' Cogito to, "I belong to myself while belonging to the world" (Honderich, 1995, 554). He suggested that the body was neither subject nor object but "an ambiguous mode of existence that infects all knowledge". A key for Merleau-Ponty, is perception and in this the seer is "caught up in what he or she sees" (Honderich, 1995, 554). Abram has extended Merleau-Ponty's work on perception:

> It is this open activity, this dynamic blend of receptivity and creativity by which every animate organism necessarily orients itself to the world (and orients the world around itself) that we speak of by the term "perception". (1996, 50)

Abram explains that people (of the business-as-usual orientation) engage with a mass of linguistic abstractions, with human-made technologies keeping us hypnotised and reflected back to ourselves so that we overlook our carnal immersion in a more-than-human milieu of sensations and sensibilities. With exceptional clarity his work illustrates the Cartesian mind/body dualism where the body, the flesh, is backgrounded and hyper-separated, privileging the mind in exclusion. Abram writes:

> Our bodies have formed themselves in delicate reciprocity with the manifold textures, sounds, and shapes of an animate earth - our eyes have
evolved in subtle interaction with other eyes, as our ears are attuned by their very structure to the howling of wolves and the honking of geese. (1996, 22, italics given)

There are many different conceptions of the nature of the self comprising substantival and non-substantival notions, embodied and decentric notions. The self is a being, is a subject of consciousness, is capable of thought and experience, is able to take deliberative action and has the ability to be self-conscious as well as the capacity to entertain first-person thoughts. Definitions of the self generally have a greater emphasis on the inner dimension of personality than the bodily form although this is beginning to change due to the seminal work of David Abram, following on from Merleau-Ponty and the tradition of phenomenology. In chapter eight my work is underpinned by the transpersonal view, with the incorporation of a phenomenological view of the self. Abram's work is used because of the strong incorporation of the sensing, perceiving body which adds insight to Heron's and Wilber's realm of primary experience and hence the conceptual and postconceptual realms, resulting in a particularly descriptive and empowering way to develop the ecological self.

7.2 Five Perspectives on the Ecological Self

These perspectives are included here to provide depth on each of the five perspectives on the ecological self, which are discussed in section two of chapter eight. The five perspectives are: an ecofeminist philosophy view; a transpersonal ecology view; a deep ecology view; a spiritual ecology view and a spiritual ecofeminist view.

An Ecofeminist Philosophy View of the Ecological Self

Plumwood states that:

...the ecological self can be interpreted as a form of mutual selfhood in which the self makes essential connection to earth others, and hence as a product of a certain sort of relational identity. In expressing that identity, the individual fulfils his or her own ends as well as those of the other (one meaning of 'self-realisation'). He or she stands in particular relations, which may be those of care, custodianship, friendship, or various diverse virtue concepts, to that other, who is treated as deserving of concern for its own sake, and hence as intrinsically worthy or valuable. The relational self and intrinsic value are, therefore, essential
theoretical complements of a virtue account of ecological selfhood. 
(1993, 185)

Plumwood's position is underpinned by a symbolic interactionist view of the self. For Plumwood (1993, 174 - 188) the ecological self arises from virtue ethics, being based on a set of commitments inherent in an identity of self-in-relationship to human and nonhuman others. Plumwood notes that as feelings, such virtue based concepts as concern, love, care, respect, gratitude, sensitivity, reverence, friendship, community and compassion (1993, 183,184) cannot easily be reduced into separate cognitive, emotional or ethical elements. Further she comments that "recognition of specific relations of dependency, responsibility, continuity and interconnection", as well as recognition of "difference (including human difference) and respect for the independence and boundlessness of the other" are other virtues (ibid.).

Plumwood writes that feminists suspect that an abstract morality must be well grounded in "sound particularistic relations to others in personal life", as this area brings together the intellectual, the emotional, the sensuous and the bodily in concrete form (1993, 183). Plumwood believes that special relationships with particular aspects of nature as experience rather than abstraction are essential to provide a depth of concern. These special relationships are based on empathy and care and enhance a wider, more generalised concern for the global environment. These wider, more generalised forms of care may be expressed as social action and political consciousness with as much fervour and validity as if they were personal relationships. This empathic generalisation (which Plumwood contrasts to Kantian universalism: 1993, 187), implies that the stronger one feels about one's own commitment the more basis one would have for expanding concern to others. She comments with sadness that an unfortunate feature of modern urban life is the loss of an identity based on particularistic association with the nature of place, together with the loss of the associated practices of care through which commitment to particular places is expressed (1993, 186). Plumwood affirms that issues of identity (which are subject to ethical assessment as they may be morally problematic) and "relationship to nature are among the key issues which need to be addressed in any new approach to nature" (1993, 184). For Plumwood, ecological selfhood is an oppositional practice - an attempt to form a new human identity linked with nature, which challenges instrumental conceptions of nature and associated social relations. In my opinion the essence of this view is the essential connection (based upon recognition
of 'otherness') between the self and earth others which results in a relational identity. Self-realisation is achieved through the goal of oneself as well as the other being fulfilled.

**A Transpersonal Ecology View of the Ecological Self**

W. Fox (1995b, 249) suggests three general kinds of bases for the experiences of commonality referred to as identification, being personal, ontological and cosmological. Fox says that personal identification as personal commonality is costing the earth through egoism and attachment. In contrast Fox claims that ontologically- and cosmologically-based identifications are transpersonal and provide an appropriate context and place for personally based identifications and serve as a corrective to the partiality and problems of attachment. According to Fox (1995b, 250-1), ontologically based identification, "refers to experiences of commonality with all that is that are brought about through deep-seated realisation of the fact that things are". Ontologically based identification is underpinned by a primarily existentialist view of the self. People whose identification base is ontological experience a strong sense of wanting to let beings be to allow them to unfold according to their own natures. Fox feels that this area is the realm of the training of consciousness such as Zen Buddhism.

Cosmologically based identification, according to Fox

> refers to experiences of commonality with all that is that are brought about through deep-seated realisation of the fact that we and all other entities are aspects of a single unfolding reality. (1995b, 252)

Cosmologically based identification is underpinned by a primarily transpersonal view of the self and can be brought about through spiritual involvement including the philosophy of Taoism, indigenous worldviews or the philosophy of Spinoza, religious or mythological incorporation, speculative philosophical cosmologies or scientific cosmologies. Fox writes that the transpersonal forms of identification, with respect to politics and lifestyles, tend to promote the freedom of all entities to unfold in their own ways causing the proponent to 'tread lightly upon the earth'. These lead to lifestyles of voluntary simplicity. The essence of this position is the experience of ontological commonality and/or the experience of cosmological commonality as the basis for identification, both of which, it is claimed, promote the liberty of entities to unfold in their own way. The essential difference between this and the ecofeminist philosophy
view is that whilst this view is based upon two varieties of commonality as a basis for identity, the ecofeminist view is based upon relationship which recognises connection and otherness as a basis for identity.

**A Deep Ecology View of the Ecological Self**

Does the love itself then, the affirmation, help to keep the fabric of the world intact? ... Yet I think we must say [yes]. For the conatus that animates the ecocosmic self is an emergent will, or 'spirit', which may be reinforced by us in 'spiritual' ways. (Mathews, 1993, 158-9)

Freya Mathews is generally regarded as a deep ecologist. Deep ecology comprises significant difference in views and several of the views including Mathews, merge with the spiritual ecology positions. Mathews' view is primarily underpinned by a transpersonal view of the self. According to Bill Devall (1990, 58) the bioregional sense of place is the homeland of the ecological self. He draws a parallel between the ecological self and the mystical Christian notion of the 'oceanic self' (1990, 40).

According to Devall (1990, 40), deep ecology understands the 'I' in relation to the other. He also stresses that the ecological self is not the small ego minimal self but the expansive self which identifies with the forests, streams and wild nature. It is associated with intimate knowledge of place, thereby identifying with it. He says, "the more we know a mountain or a watershed, for example and feel it as our self, the more we can feel its suffering" (1990, 52). He writes that "the positive message of deep ecology is maximal Self-realisation of all beings, not just human beings..." (ibid.). In asserting that the place of humans in the natural order is realised through participation in emotions, rituals, and prayerfulness and thought, Devall states that:

Humans can enhance the cosmic will-to-live, self-realisation, in a small but vital way. Nature needs us as a life-affirming people. Affirmation of our self-realising ecological self embraces more and more of the "other" into ourself. The more open, receptive, vulnerable, adventurous we are, the more we affirm the integrity of being-in-the-world. (1990, 70)

Devall's position is primarily underpinned by a Buddhist understanding of the self.

Plumwood contributes a scathing analysis of several of the deep ecology notions of the ecological self because in her opinion they are based on a denial of difference, therefore the resulting incorporation is a form of colonisation (1993, 173 - 174). In Plumwood's view recognition of both connection and otherness as the basis of interaction are
essential to address problematic dualisms. She particularly critiques Fox's notion of the transpersonal version of ego psychology. This is because she says it sits within a domination framework where an 'other' reappears as a projection of the self, where "the entire dynamic of interaction takes place within the self, rather than between the self and the external other" (1993, 175). She comments that different deep ecology accounts of identification and of self are often not compatible, are often deliberately vague and are often shifting. She also says that there is often the confusion of separation and hyper separation, radical exclusion and non-identity (1993, 177). However Freya Mathews' version of the ecological self addresses Plumwood's concerns.

In my opinion Mathews' account of the ecological self is a truly radical ecological one. This is because it is deeply ecospiritual, it is based on an ethic of care, it is underpinned by a metaphysic of interconnectedness and systems theory, it is situated within a context of new science and generally provides ample philosophical affirmation and credibility for the arguments of the environmental movement in all of its applications involving the intrinsic value of the non-human world. She writes on meaningfulness as an aspect of the ecological self:

Meaningfulness is to be found in our spiritual capacity to keep the ecocosm on course, by teaching our hearts to practise affirmation, and by awakening our faculty of active, outreaching, world-directed love. Though a tendency to 'tread lightly' on the earth, and to take practical steps to safeguard the particular manifestations of Nature, will flow inevitably from such an attitude, the crucial contribution will be the attitude itself, a contribution of the heart and spirit. (1994, 160; emphasis given)

The synthesis of Devall's and Mathews' positions is an attitude of interconnection which allows the self to identify with other nature by intimate knowledge of it. Fox's ecological ontological and cosmological forms of identification synthesise with Devall and Mathew's synthesis in a holistic way, in the attitude of respect for other's freedom to unfold. The connection through intimate knowledge allows us to empathically feel with it, to suffer as it suffers. Mathews' position is more relational than is Fox's and Devall's, emphasising care and love flowing between the two as connection and relies on attitude as the crucial contribution. Because the ecofeminist philosophy position is relational, Mathews' view is towards a synthesis of deep ecology and ecofeminist philosophy.
Jeremy Hayward (1990, 64) and other spiritual ecologists proclaim that "healing our personal, elemental connection with the phenomenal world" goes hand in hand with healing our society. He teaches that identification with others brings genuine heartfelt as well as intellectually based valuation of all that is and suggests that this sense of genuine valuation or sense of sacredness is the true perception of our world. In Hayward's words, "To perceive sacredness is to harmonize within the total natural world, of which we are" (1990, 74). Along with John Seed and Pat Fleming (1996, 499 - 506), Thomas Berry (1996, 410-14) and others, Macy calls for a new awakening to the world, a new awareness of the world, an awareness of the world as a lover or of the world as the self. She calls for a spiritual awakening, a re-imagining and re-visioning of the world in such a way that westerners may empower ourselves to change our destructive ways before it is too late. It arises as a creative, personal response to the despair and distress of ecological destruction, social dysfunction and uncontrolled violence.

The self, according to Macy:

> is the metaphoric construct of identity and agency, the hypothetical piece of turf on which we construct our strategies for survival, the notion around which we focus our instincts for self-preservation, our needs for self-approval, and the boundaries of our self interest. (1993, 183)

Macy says that the replacement of the 'ego-self' with the 'eco-self' amounts to a "greening of the self" (1993, 183). The conventional, egoist notion of the self needs to be replaced by wider constructs of identity and self interest which are "co-extensive with other beings and the life of our planet" (ibid.). Macy suggests that bound in with the conventional notion of the self is a denial of the crises facing the world. When this is acknowledged, the despair and mourning enables "suffering with" the world which is the literal meaning of compassion. This enables a new awareness, a deep understanding of the interconnectedness of all beings. The theoretical base that supports Macy's notion of the greening of the self derives from systems theory and non-dualistic spirituality, particularly Buddhism. As described in the section on interconnectedness, it is also supported by recent theories in physics which support dynamic interconnectedness and relationship.
Macy stresses that inspiration derived from the Buddhist path gives one a sense of liberation, of being able to act in the world with, "a more caring sense of social engagement" (ibid.). Buddhist ecologists see that the heartfelt sense of interdependence is natural and that a mistaken metaphysics has led to the alienation between our bodies and the Earth, humans and other species and between our thoughts and our bodies. Along with Fox, Naess and Seed, Macy's account has been criticised by Plumwood because of the indistinguishability of the self and because of the expansion of the self to include others which has been labelled colonialist, or part of the dominator model (1993, 173,4). My comment on this critique is that firstly it is based upon an inadequate understanding of the Buddhist notion of the self. Secondly the imagery and metaphor is to bring about a spiritual awakening to feel empathy and compassion for the world and its beings and to enable one to act in a caring, democratic, deeply concerned way as a result of this new awareness.

Thomas Berry discusses this same potential for revelation of the intricacy and beauty of the world through an expansion of the soul rather than the self. This may be a further answer to Plumwood's criticism. He also uses descriptive imagery:

The barriers disappear. ... Dawn and sunset are once again transforming experiences as are all the sights and sounds and scents and tastes and the feel for the natural world about us, the surging sea, the sound of the wind, the brooding forests... (1996, 411)

These descriptions of the ecological self emphasise the imaginative, the creative and the spiritual, aiming to develop love, deep empathy and a sense of deep connection with human and nonhuman others. The following quotation from Hermann Hesse illustrates an example of the character Siddhartha's new revelation of the intricacy and beauty of the world, after a brief identity crisis following a long search for the nature and character of the self. Siddhartha realises that he needs to perceive, to be, rather than to think in abstraction which is the basis of illusion:

Siddhartha learned something new on every step of his path, for the world was transformed and he was enthralled. He saw the sun rise over forest and mountains and set over the distant palm shore. At night he saw the stars in the heavens and the sickle-shaped moon floating like a boat in the blue. He saw trees, stars, animals, clouds, rainbows, rocks, weeds, flowers, brook and river, the sparkle of dew on bushes in the morning, distant high mountains blue and pale; birds sang, bees hummed, the wind blew gently across the rice fields. All this, coloured and in a thousand different forms, had always been there. The sun and moon had always
shone; the rivers had always flowed and the bees had hummed, but in
previous times all this had been nothing to Siddhartha but a fleeting and
illusive veil before his eyes, regarded with distrust, condemned to be
disregarded and ostracized from the thoughts, because it was not reality,
because reality lay on the other side of the visible. (Hesse, 1983, 37)

The spiritual ecologists' view of the ecological self is typically descriptive, metaphoric
and poetic, using colourful imagery to illustrate deep connection. Nonhuman nature is
regarded with awe, deep respect and reverence.

Elizabeth Roberts and Elias Amidon (1991, 1) depict the ecological self as a deep,
intuitive sense of oneness and connectedness with all of life, the universe. This short
Navajo chant from Roberts and Amidon illumines the notion with beauty:

The mountains, I become part of it...
The herbs, the fir tree, I become part of it.
The morning mists, the clouds, the gathering waters,
I become part of it.
The wilderness, the dew drops, the pollen...
I become part of it. (1991, 5)

Roberts and Amidon's (1991, 1 - 5) notion of the ecological self involves choosing at
different times to identify with different aspects of our interconnected existences such as
homeless humans or hunted whales. We are urged to pay attention to all relationships
among forms of life and to "use imagination to explore the binding curve that joins us
together", to seek knowledge of the other, to link with it and to care for it as you would
care for yourself. My understanding of this notion is to use imagination and
visualisation to feel as the other, in order to empathise and be truly compassionate so
that one can heartfully care for the other as oneself.

The notion of caring for oneself appears to be a crucial part of the definition. Albert
LaChance demonstrates convincingly that within the cultural setting, how one treats
oneself and how one treats earth others are implicitly connected. The essence is that we
need to detoxify ourselves from our addictions so that we can detoxify the planet - a
cultural and planetary therapy. His process enables the unfolding of a deep spirituality
where we feel ecstasy at the real participation of the cosmos/earth dimension of
ourselves. His message is one of creativity: to re-create ourselves in harmony with the
universal spirit which is immanent in ourselves and all of nature, while at the same time
recreating our culture to allow the continuation of the evolution of the universe. He
states:
Our personality will settle into proper and natural relationship with itself, with others, and with the planet. We will experience this as connectedness. We will feel connected to the inner world again. Our new integrity will cause visions, spiritual experiences, and insights that we never thought possible. We will feel connected to the outer world as well. The false personalities we might have built will dissolve, the masks will drop, and our real selves - our Original Selves - will emerge and smile in the light of day. ... We will feel our own worth - our preciousness. We will know ourselves and feel with others. (LaChance, 1991, 69-70; emphasis given)

M. Fox also presents this theme of the connection between self-love and love of human and non-human others. He gives the following summary definition of compassion, which I see as a further perspective on the ecological self:

Compassion may be a passionate way of living borne of an awareness of the interconnectedness of all creatures by reason of their common Creator. To be compassionate is to incorporate one's own fullest energies with cosmic ones into the twin tasks of 1) relieving the pain of fellow creatures by way of justice-making, and 2) celebrating the existence, time and space that all creatures share as a gift from the only One who is fully compassion. Compassion is our kinship with the universe and the universe's Maker; it is the action we take because of that kinship. (Fox, 1990, 34)

Fox cites Eckhart, Thomas Aquinas and Hildegard of Bingen to support his view that the body is in the soul rather than the reverse which is the commonly held view. Sheldrake describes the soul as the body's animating, or life principle, that which leaves the body at death. Sheldrake (1996, 66) says there are three aspects of the soul, being the vegetative soul (responsible for body form), the animal soul (which gives us our animal nature) and the rational soul, or intellect which is the conscious part of the mind. He says the morphic field performs as the animal soul which underlies an individual's form and behaviour as well as the activity of the rational mind. According to Fox the mechanistic, reductionist paradigm, whereby it was believed that the soul is in the body (somewhere in the brain) has resulted in a contraction of our souls into anthropocentrism. This has resulted in a refusal to connect with others with the greater Universe and with cosmology.

Citing Eckhart, Fox states, "the soul is where God works compassion" (1996, 75). He comments that we make the soul through living joy and grief, and out of both compassion arises. Sheldrake takes this further and suggests that we can extend our
field as far as we can see, that we live in a world of "overlapping mental fields". Therefore according to this view, compassion arises in the soul which is our 'animating principle'. It is the realisation of both the inner (or true) self and the outer self. (As referred to earlier in the section on the self, Buddhism also has strong theme of compassion.)

Spiritual ecologists tend to emphasise the connection between the healing of the self and the healing of the world, arising from the interbeing of self and nature. After examining the Greek origins of the word 'ecology', Thomas Moore (1993, 137) defines ecology simply as "the mystery of home" and puts forward the idea that it is basically concerned with "the soul's constant longing for and establishment of a deep sense of home". 'Home' in this sense, is an experience rather than merely a physical place. Moore describes it for all its worldly manifestations as "an experience that... is felt deep in the heart" (1994, 136). It is both internal and external and this same feeling may extend to our own house a locality, a river valley or mountain range, a community, a bioregion, a geopolitical area, a nation or the planet. He comments that one of humanity's most profound mysteries is, "the desire for home and the necessity for each of us of homecoming" (1994, 139, emphasis given). Ecology in this view is a "dimension of all things... the ecology of our work, family, house, region, entertainment, ... [ecology is] a state of mind, an attitude and a posture" (1994, 143, 144).

In Moore's view, our souls are constantly longing for home but our mechanistic, science-based culture believes that experiments and study are the only trustworthy guides to being in the natural world. Soulful cultures on the contrary, establish a feeling of home through cultural practices such as rituals, singing, stories, dance and other imaginal means, resulting in the affirmation of the connection between (and a reduction in the distance between) inner and outer nature. Moore (1994, 144) proffers that "ecology is the mysterious work of providing home for the soul, one that is felt in the very depths of the heart". Therefore ecology is a sensibility rather than a political position, the very core of an ecological sensibility being the soulful experience of home. Therefore ecology "requires profound education and initiation" (1994, 140).

This is a difficult category of positions to essentialise because of its breadth. However in my opinion the essence is the attitude of love and compassion, suffering-with on the
basis of connection, using an expansive soul/spirit as the basis for identification and ecology as the soulful experience of home as deep inter-connectedness. I shall synthesise this view with the progressive synthesis so far. The ecological self comprises the attitude of out-reaching, world-directed love, compassion, deep relationship or connection, mutuality, expansiveness and respect for other on the basis of respect for difference, the felt soul connectedness with home as people and place and a postconceptual re-inhabiting of the body.

A Spiritual Ecofeminist View of the Ecological Self

It is appropriate to begin and end with ecofeminism in order to illustrate the distance between the poles of the spectrum of ecofeminist views on the ecological self. Charlene Spretnak (1989, 127-132) describes contemporary Goddess spirituality as firstly, the belief in the immanence of the divine throughout people, nature and the cosmos. Secondly, Goddess spirituality encompasses life-affirming awakenings to the connectedness of all things which is experienced through meditation and through the body in nature and sexuality. Thirdly, it embraces life as cyclic rhythms of birth, maturation and death. She describes a concept which I take to be the ecological self as, “experiential knowledge, in a powerful body/mind union, of the holistic truths of spirituality” (1989, 129). There are a number of varieties of ecofeminist spiritualities, Goddess spirituality being only one. Starhawk writes that the web of caring and compassion characterises Goddess spirituality (1989, 174 – 185). Both Starhawk (1989) and Spretnak (1989) describe the importance of recognising the multiplicity of spiritual directions.

Rosemary Radford Reuther, an ecofeminist theologian, stresses the necessity to reshape northern (especially Christian) cultures with the view that there is not one right way in which it should be reshaped. She writes of:

[T]he whole cosmic community of nature as alive, …[and] grounded in and bodying forth the divine Spirit which is its source of life and renewal of life. (Radford Reuther, 1998)

She writes of a concept which I take to be the ecological self, as follows:

We might think of our particular gift of symbol making consciousness as where all nature becomes conscious of itself in a new self-reflective way, not in the sense of separating us from other species, but in the sense of celebrating the whole cosmic creative process, as well as learning to
harmonize our needs with those of the rest of the earth-community. Such a reintegration of mind into body, consciousness into nature, will also reshape our concept of God. (Radford Reuther, 1998)


This position finalises the progressive synthesis of the ecological self. A radical ecological view of the ecological self is a self which embodies the attitude and practice of out-reaching, world-directed love. It embraces deep relationship or connection, mutuality and a felt deep sense of interconnectedness with the cycle of life. The interconnectedness with the cycle of life is underpinned by creativity, care and compassion, relationship or connection, expansiveness of soul, respect for other on the basis of respect for difference, the felt soul connectedness with home as people and place and a postconceptual re-inhabiting of the body.

This table is included here to support Wilber’s view of the problems of the underdevelopment of the ego in reaching self-actualisation of human capacity.

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<td>1. physical</td>
<td>Prenatal</td>
<td>The Body</td>
<td>Preconceptual</td>
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<td>2. sensoriperceptual</td>
<td>Prenatal - 3 mths</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. emotional-sexual</td>
<td>1 month - 6 mths</td>
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<td>4. phantasmic</td>
<td>6 mths - 12 mths</td>
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<td>5. representational mind</td>
<td>15 mths - 2 yrs</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. rule/role mind</td>
<td>6 - 8 years</td>
<td>The Mind</td>
<td>Conceptual</td>
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<td>7. formal reflexive mind</td>
<td>11 - 15 years</td>
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<td>Postconceptual</td>
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<td>8. vision-logic</td>
<td>21 years</td>
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<td>9. subtle</td>
<td>28 years</td>
<td>The Spiritual</td>
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<td>10. causal</td>
<td>35 years</td>
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<td>11. ultimate</td>
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Table 6. Wilber’s Eleven Basic Structures of Consciousness, Tabulated Against their Approximate Age of Emergence and Realm of Consciousness and Heron’s Equivalent Realms

¹²⁹ I have illustrated the correlation of Heron's work so that it can be used in the next sub-section.
APPENDIX EIGHT - DILEMMAS, TENSIONS AND CONSTRAINTS FOR SCHOOL-AS-COMMUNITY

8.1 Politics, Participation and Sustainability

Education is locked into the business-as-usual worldview through rigid structures of accountability and through the non-questioning of particular kinds of relationships, structures, processes and strategies which are implemented because they are 'obvious', part of the every-day normality (Down, 1993, 12; Smyth, 2001, 286; Bowers, 1995). In addition, a deliberate mythology has been constructed which cites teachers as the cause of economic failure (Smyth, 2001, 186). The mythology has resulted in tighter classroom procedures and narrowly prescribed forms of action which includes teacher appraisal schemes, performance indicators based upon standardised literacy and numeracy testing regimes, along with measures such as performance budgeting, supposedly to restore the failing economy.

8.1.1 Instrumental Self-Management

Since the Karmel Report of 1973, Australian schools and education systems have been the subject of numerous reports, restructures and reforms with the goal of implementing the agenda of devolution of responsibility from the education departments (the centre) to the schools themselves. The tightened central goals, particularly around standardised testing and system accountability requirements, suggest managed participation rather than participatory management (Rizvi, 1995, 29). Further, just as the thrust for accountability passed from the centre to the periphery in the case of the states, a similar phenomenon occurred from the centre to the periphery at the federal level. A newer and tightened central role for the federal government has developed, where financial and educational accountability is required of the states to the federal government as a condition for receipt of federal education funds (Lingard, Knight and Porter, 1995, 90, 91). Therefore while schools have increased accountability to their state governments, state governments have increased accountability to the federal government. Rizvi (1995, 28, 29) shows that in response to a federal discourse of corporate managerialism, at a time when the Victorian government was facing times of difficult economic and
political conditions it (the Victorian government) decided upon a view of corporate managerialism in order to reassert government control over decision-making in schools. The consequence was participation only as a means to an end because it was no longer negotiable at the local level. At least during the 1980s then, the participation agenda was purely instrumental and rhetorical at the level of the schools.

8.1.2 Nebulous Notions of Participation

Rizvi (1995) and Lingard, Knight and Porter (1995) write that the initial impetus for devolution was a strong social democratic ideology of participation. This underpinned the Karmel Report and was embedded in the Whitlam government of 1972 – 1975 (Lingard, Knight and Porter, 1995, 87). However, the more recent restructuring rounds have been underpinned by a corporate managerial philosophy, which locates the notion of participation within an ideology of market individualism. Because of their opposing philosophical bases, the two conceptions of participation are actually contradictory. There is also a third, representative notion of participation.

The notion of participation is directly linked to politics and has been variously defined according to different conceptions of politics (Rizvi, 1995, 18). It relates to how decision-making is, and ought to be organised (ibid.). The representative view of participation is based on a pluralist idea of the state, which assumes that individual interests must be mediated and represented by groups because society is too complex for extensive popular participation to be possible. Thus, representative structures need to be developed so that nominated people can negotiate decisions on behalf of their constituents (Rizvi, 1995, 19). This view is underpinned by a view of the state as neutral. Proponents of social democracy challenge the view of the state as being neutral, arguing that the issues on the agenda are not necessarily reached through a pluralist process. Rizvi argues that in the representative system, some groups are privileged whereas others are not represented. Further, the representative system is built upon a pessimistic, self-interested view of human nature and social organisation.

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130 Radical democracy proponents would be in complete agreement. Although this dissertation is underpinned by radical theories, I have used social democracy examples in line with Rizvi, whose work is used here. There is much in common between radical and social democracy, and they can be seen as parallel streams of democratic thought which have been used by the radicals towards their goal of reforming society. Social democracy was historically inspired by the Marxists in support of the working class against the power of capital, towards the goal of social and economic democracy (Shaw, 1999, 2). At present, social democracy is widely perceived to be under great threat from the Blair/Giddens ‘third way’ agenda which, according to critics, is forcing social democracy into “neoliberalism with a human face” (Ewans, 2002, 1).
whereas there are good grounds for believing that people can be educated into participative processes.

Social democracy is underpinned by the theories of Rousseau, Marx and Dewey\textsuperscript{131} (Rizvi, 1995, 20). It is oriented towards the principles of caring and sharing in community, where a sense of common culture and citizenry is nurtured by participatory structures. The social democratic view suggests that:

\begin{quote}
[O]rganisational relations should be equal, reciprocal, and whenever possible, direct and many-sided, unmediated by representatives, leaders, bureaucrats and institutions, or by organisational codes or abstract rules.
\end{quote}

(Rizvi, 1995, 20)

The market view of participation is supported by the idea of the supremacy of the individual within an operating mechanism of choice. According to this view the collective social good can only be attained when there are multifarious opportunities for individuals to pursue their own private aims with minimal state interference. This view assumes that only the individual knows what is in her best interest and no state or group can judge this. Therefore, the role of governments should be to enforce general rules that facilitate the individuals’ right to choose. Proponents of the market view argue that within the free market system there is increased choice and diversity along with instruments for democratic accountability. Each view of participation points to a preferred method of participation, delineates the scope of participation (who participates and when) and outlines a position on the feasibility of popular participation. For example, is it realistic to expect widespread participation? Answers to this question will be determined by one’s political orientation.

Holders of the market view would argue that organisations simply will not survive without hierarchical leadership, whereas social democratic theorists argue that people can learn participative structures and processes so that hierarchies are not necessary (Rizvi, 1995, 21). Holders of representative and market views would suggest that participation is to enable defence of individual and group interests and to protect against the arbitrary or despotic operation of power. Holders of a social democratic view reject the individualism suggesting that participation is an end in itself, a collaborative

\textsuperscript{131} Interestingly, commentators suggest that Dewey’s commitment to democratic practices in schools could never become education for democratic empowerment in the larger society because he failed to recognise the fundamental contradiction between capitalism and democracy. A vision of a radical democratic politic will be beyond capitalism (Brosio, 1994, 1).
learning activity that is fundamental for the generation of a compassionate, humane society. Lingard, Knight and Porter (1995, 96) comment that the social democratic view of participation, the original conception of participation when the devolution/participation debate was initiated by the Karmel Report, is the one which is most useful for opposing the managerialist or economic rationalist view of schooling.

8.1.3 Discourses of Technocratic Rationality and Economic Determinism

Critical theorists such as Smyth (2001) point to the structural tensions which are deeply embedded in schools through instrumental local management of schools and through market and representative views of participation, as illustrated below.

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<td>Devolution, autonomy, collegiality, collaboration, self-management, liberation management, team work, partnerships, networking, flexibility, responsiveness, devolution of control. Social justice, democratic process, active citizenship, responsibility, participatory decision-making, community participation, critical reflection, responsibility for behaviour, reconciliation, ecological sustainability, cooperation, sensitivity and concern about other people, care for other people, respects people's basic rights, values diversity of cultural expression, actively includes others from different cultures, peaceful conflict resolution, negotiation of personal difference, actively anti-racism and anti-discrimination, critically reflects on consequences of environmental behaviour, works to preserve natural habitats/species.</td>
<td>Performance appraisal, line management, performance management, performance indicators, curriculum audits, education reviews, leaner organisations, quality assurance, advanced skills assessment, outcomes measurement, total quality management, corporate managerialism, privatisation, commodification, international best practice, strategic reviews, student profiles, benchmarks, leaner organisations, commodification, economic determinism, marketisation, re-centralisation of control, national interest, international competitiveness, 'do more with less', schools operate like private enterprises. Key competencies, standards and skills formation, national curricula, testing, appraisal, profiling, auditing, knowledge delivery, measures of competence.</td>
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Advocates of the local management of schools reforms urge teachers to the left of the chart, towards libertarian tenets. Meanwhile, they ignore the significant demands of the right which are conditional upon funding and which force schools towards hierarchy
and conformity with business-as-usual agendas. Effectively, ignoring this contradiction means that sustainability is an out of hours pleasantry rather than a meaningful structural change of the magnitude required to bring about cultural, ecological and social change to schools and society. Only by genuinely reorienting the system towards sustainability will self-managing schools be fully enabled to reorient themselves to sustainability. Contradictions such as those cited above are regarded by Sterling (2001, 21) as education paradoxes – that whilst education is seen as a key to change, it daily reinforces unsustainable values and practices.

As a result of the above, critics argue that the reforms towards self management are largely tokens only, allowing local decision makers to decide the allocation of ever-dwindling resources while the real power is being recentralised and politicised. Smyth writes that school-based decision-making was initiated just before schools "were about to go broke" (2001, 40). Moves towards national standards and national curricula in particular evidence a centralisation of power as has never been seen in the history of Australian education. The Education Department of Western Australia writes that in 1997, Commonwealth, State and Territory ministers agreed to a national literacy and numeracy goal and sub goal:

> An important part of the national plan is the measurement of students' performance against nationally agreed benchmark standards using rigorous state-based assessment procedures and the dissemination of comparative information to parents and the community. Western Australia is managing the development and implementation of methodologies to ensure that results are nationally comparable. (2000, 131)

The nationalising of standards and curricula have the potential to remove from teachers and schools the ability to make meaningful, relevant local decisions that do not conform to the guidelines. These decisions may be about the nature and implementation of education, or environmental education, or about the unique requirements of particular individual students. Whilst national curriculum proponents may rightly argue that the new curriculum would be broad and flexible enough to take into account local and individual circumstances, radicals would say that the main problem is the existence of the system itself. This is because as history shows, it has inherent potential to become rigid, non-flexible and controlling as a bearer of ideology which is then oppressive.
Finally, although education funding has increased, there are extremely high social costs as education departments implement their policies of closing small schools, with departments arguing that large schools are better resourced and are therefore able to provide a broader education - an argument which is vociferously disputed by proponents of small schools.

The managerialist agenda forces teachers to orient their work towards narrowly defined literacy and numeracy benchmarks through enforced standardised literacy and numeracy assessment, giving only piecemeal attention to the sustainability agendas. Applying the work of ecofeminist philosopher Val Plumwood (1993), the sustainability agenda exists as dualised ‘other’ in which it is of significantly lower importance than its master, which is business-as-usual. While the business-as-usual management agenda is foregrounded through regulation and detailed management, performance management and standardised testing, the sustainability agenda is backgrounded and hyper separated away so that it is powerless and of secondary importance to business-as-usual. Through powerful, interlocking systemic technologies of oppression with the support of the media, the sustainability agenda with its emphases on social and ecological values, cooperation, community centredness and care is relegated to the ‘when there is time, mainly after school’ slot in the school program. These accountability requirements apply to all schools which receive any government funding of any description, that is, private and state schools.

8.2 Issues in the Generalisability of School-as-Community to other WA Schools

In practice, community participation in schooling underscores a massive transformation process which has involved industrial and social issues which have affected school culture. It is now thirty years since the Karmel Report, yet many of these issues remain unresolved. They are embedded as contradictions and tensions in this research, as they are in schools. Examples include school size; the nature and boundaries of teachers’ work; the role and status of age-as-wisdom (and the role and status of long-term participatory experience in the particular school community); as well as the role and status of professional workers in relation to volunteers. According to my thesis, these
tensions all need to be addressed through participatory decision-making processes for effective local resolution and learning. It helps to keep in mind Mouffe’s (1992, 239) recognition that at the heart of democracy is a tension between the common good and individual rights that can never be resolved. The participatory democratic process honours people’s lived experience, and enables a negotiation of their views. It is an ongoing process. The key to learning sustainability is cyclical reflection upon sensory experience, forming socio-ecologically contextualised knowing. This is also the key to determining the generalisability of the research. The following account can only be theoretical, since it is the local characters and contexts who together construct their lived experience.

I will begin with the question of which schools could apply the research. I will not include expensive, elite private schools in the discussion of which schools the research applies to, because I do not have relevant experience or practical knowledge. If elite private schools do indeed educate our future leaders as is frequently claimed, then they urgently need substantive research on ways they can orient themselves towards sustainability. I will not consider Catholic schools either, because I do not have practical knowledge of the socio-political culture of the system or the schools. Substantive research is needed to assist Catholic schools orient themselves towards sustainability. The research definitely applies to small non-systemic intentional community schools such as Riverdale and Forest Schools\(^{132}\), and I claim it will also apply to small state schools. In Western Australia there are 114 schools with 36 – 100 students enrolled. There are 110 schools with 100 – 200 students enrolled\(^{133}\) (Education Department of Western Australia, 2001b, 17). I shall address this claim below. For the purpose of the claim I shall include only the 114 state schools with between 36 – 100 students, although I do not discount the possibility that it may apply to many of the subsequent category.

\(^{132}\) This refers to the approximately thirty small non-Aboriginal, non-systemic, non-religious intentional community schools in Western Australia (AISWA, 2002).

\(^{133}\) I could not ascertain the number in this category which are in the lower end of the bracket. Nevertheless, many people claim that even this category is within the definition of a small school (for example Raywid, 1999, 2).
8.2.1 In Defence of the Two Research Schools

Firstly, I wish to defend the two research schools against the possibility of criticism that they are elitist simply on the basis that they are non-systemic. This criticism goes something like the one of Kozol (1972, 40 – 42) in which he claims that the line of reasoning of those children of the rich who escape with their children to the hills and woods, who say they are retiring from institutions of power and oppression, is less than honest. Kozol contends that they are empowered and whether they like it or not, will wield the power of domination over the disempowered in their own country or over those in third world countries. If they do not directly wield the power, they benefit indirectly by the oppressions of their peers over the disempowered. Kozol says:

The beautiful children do not wish cold rooms or broken glass, starvation, rats, or fear for anybody; nor will they stake their lives, or put their bodies on the line, or interrupt one hour of the sunlit morning, or sacrifice one moment of the golden afternoon, to take a hand in altering the unjust terms of a society in which these things are possible (1972, 41).

He likened the situation to a sandbox for the children of the Auschwitz SS guards.

I do not know if the founders of Forest School were the children of the rich. It is possible that they were largely the children of city-dwelling professionals. The school-as-community has continued, and it now has a twenty year history. The current children, and in fact the children of the founders, are certainly not the children of the rich. At the time of the empirical research, both Forest and Riverdale Schools had quite high levels of single parent families, and both schools claimed extra Commonwealth funds on the basis that a disproportionately high number of their populations are classified as low-income earners. Beachtown, the regional centre, was a small farming community that was ‘settled’ by alternative lifestylers as well as the professionals who followed them, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and it is still experiencing strong economic growth due to the expanding tourism and viticulture industries. There are many surfing and/or tourism oriented towns in the south west of Western Australia, each with one or more schools. Beachtown does not stand out as being particularly different. There are of course, variable levels of affluence in the south west, but it could not be claimed that Forest School has a high level of affluence.

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In addition to the thirty small schools mentioned in the footnote above, there are fifteen Aboriginal non-systemic schools (AICS, 2001) in remote Aboriginal communities in Western Australia who could certainly not be accused of being elitist.
Riverdale school-as-community now has a six year history. It has a similar clientele to at least five or six other schools in the regional city of Riverdale. There is no particular reason for accusing Riverdale Community School of elitism. There is now substantial international evidence to support Kozol’s claim of the rich oppressing the poor. I agree that the founders benefited from the oppressions of the disempowered, and unfortunately so do a huge percentage of the population of Australia – almost every time we spend money - through complicity. His accusation that the ‘escapees’ from the city did not work to address injustice is absolutely incorrect in the two study schools. All the Forest School people I interviewed devoted considerable amounts of voluntary time working for social and ecological justice (in addition to their school community commitment). All my colleagues at Riverdale worked for social and ecological justice through our school community and elsewhere. I trust I have countered the claim that the two research schools are elitist which prevents the research being applicable in state schools. Individuals I still see regularly from both schools say that their children are happy and well educated. ‘Well educated’ means that they were nurtured in a genuine community setting, and they tend to do well at Beachtown High School or their chosen Riverdale High School.

8.2.2 Small state schools

At the start of this research in 1995, I did not believe that I could implement this research in state schools, but Education Department policies and practices have changed so much that I am now convinced that the research applies to at least small state schools. I shall justify that claim now. The same structural contradictions which act against the reorientation towards sustainability in state schools, as discussed above, apply to Forest School and Riverdale School as a condition of their Commonwealth funding. Therefore, the small state schools have similar capacity to move in the direction of an expanded sense of school-as-community through participatory decision-making as Forest and Riverdale Schools did. Indeed, many already have and research by Estill et al. (2001) reviews these efforts (detailed below). There is strong encouragement by the Education Department of Western Australia to improve the local management of schools (LMSN), as is evidenced by their LMSN website and by the Estill et al.

135 At the time of final editing of this dissertation, the LMSN website is not working. I cannot discover through telephone inquiries whether this is temporary or ongoing.
(2001) research which was funded by the Education Department of Western Australia. I will not enter into a protracted analysis of the differences between the two research schools and state schools, because there are such a huge range of socio-economic and socio-political differences between state schools that this would not be feasible or useful. There will be at least some state schools which are similar in nature to the research schools, particularly small schools which cater to similar groups of families. For example, there is a small rural state school which is within twenty kilometres of Forest School, in a neighbouring town which I will call Wattledale. It has approximately the same number of children, and children who live between the two schools go to either school.

Since January 2001, all state schools have been expected by the Western Australian Education Department to be implementing school based decision-making as per the School Education Act 1999 (WA). The Regulatory Framework on School Councils, states:

Both in spirit and in its detail, the legislation affirms the necessity for close cooperation between the school and its parents and community in ensuring the best possible educational outcome for students. There are two aspects to this. The first is the family-level cooperation between a child’s parents and the school. The second is the cooperation that takes place through involvement in school groups such as the Parents and Citizen’ Association and the School Council. (Department of Education of Western Australia, 2002)

However, whilst the Act and the Regulatory Framework empower the school to incorporate as much community participation as it chooses, the Act and Framework could potentially be used by the principal to limit involvement to a certain representative level. Local experience shows that in the face of a strong community sphere, it would be difficult to do this, however. The problem of an under-developed community sphere together with a principal who opposed community development would be a difficult anti-democratic quandary to work with, however. Although my experience is that this scenario is increasingly less likely, it is definitely a quandary.

All state schools will also be expected to have the new Curriculum Framework fully implemented by 2004. Several of the state schools that I regularly attend as part of my student teacher practicum visits use an ‘overlapping groups’ approach to decision-making, and one has recently received a grant to begin to develop itself as an eco-
village. From my perspective, most of these schools appear to have some degree of
dysfunctionality around the whole notion of cooperation and participation in decision-
making (although they claim to use it), and I suggest that cooperative inquiry research
would apply very well. These groups of schools cater to similar socio-economic
groupings of families as the community schools in the research.

It could be claimed that the two research schools are attended by a higher proportion of
idealists than is the normal school population, as people have chosen to attend them
because they propound a holistic education vision. However in response, principals of
several new state schools claim that they have had high enrolments from parents who
are ‘crossing boundaries’ to attend them on the basis of their advertised holistic
education vision. There may be more idealists than the average at the two research
schools, but then some state schools will have more than the average as well due to
boundary crossing. On this point, Beachtown was a Mecca for alternative lifestylers in
the early 1980s when Forest School was commenced. Only a proportion of these
‘idealists’ involved themselves in Forest School. Theoretically, the local state schools
should also have more ‘idealists’ than the average. Interestingly, Wattledale State
School, a school of approximately the same size as Forest School and the nearest
school, won a state wide environmental award five years ago.

It could be argued that parents willing to pay for their children’s education\textsuperscript{136} would
logically be willing to spend extra time at the school. I agree with this – in both schools
in the research, parents were required to contribute a minimum number of 2 hours per
week in the school. However, all the local state schools in our region also receive
considerable parent contribution in terms of hours, particularly from parents in the
junior and middle primary children. Whilst it is true that the two research schools are
able to demand the contribution whilst state schools cannot, the state schools receive all
their assistance completely voluntarily and willingly, while the issue of parent
contribution of time is an on-going one for parents at the two research schools.
Nonetheless, I concede some advantage to the research schools on this point, but I do
not believe that it detracts from the state school’s capacity to move towards
sustainability.

\textsuperscript{136} In both schools, the school fees are currently (2002) approximately $300 - $150 per child per term, with the lower figures for
subsequent children.
It could be argued that parents at the research schools would be more empowered to participate in school decision-making since they are idealistic enough to send their children to these schools and pay for them. Whilst I also concede this possibility to the two research schools, I also contend that too much empowerment (and determined single-mindedness) does not make for good participative decision-making at all, irrespective of the person’s positional power. The issue of power is a serious one in participatory decision-making, and I shall discuss it in more detail shortly. It is a key in the transformation from hierarchical ways of relating to cooperative ways and hence it is a key towards sustainability. On this score I think it would be fair to say that the two research schools do not have any particular advantage, other than the possibility of a greater attendance at participatory decision-making events.

Finally, it could be argued that the research schools are successful simply because they are small. Yes! Substantial research (detailed in chapter three) now points strongly in the direction of size being a correlate of successful schooling. Schumacher (1973) and his supporters such as the English Human Scale Education Network claim that people work better in small groups. Therefore, with the provisos addressed above, this research can be applied to small rural/regional state schools in the south west of Western Australia at least. A strong implication of this research for middle and large sized schools is that they should devolve into subsidiaries or mini schools for enhanced community development opportunities (Carnie, 2003).

8.2.3 Medium Sized Schools

There are now, at the end of 2003, a number of state schools in our local education district which are new, and have been started as community schools according to the definition of community school in this research. The most recent one is a middle school, which is commenced in January 2003. It was started with tremendous community participation and support. The local community library and community theatre will be located at the school for the use of the broader community and the school during school times and after school. Other facilities such as a well equipped

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137 I can only claim that the research applies to rural/regional state schools because my research, which is based on personal and professional experience, has been in a regional city (Riverdale) and the south west region of WA which is primarily rural. This does not discount the possibility of applicability of the research to state schools, however.

138 Smaller operating collectivities.

139 Middle schools typically cater for children within the 11 – 15 year old age group, as does the one being referred to above.
gymnasium, wood work centre and visual arts centre are available for community use after school hours. The middle school is quite large and is expected to cater for seven to eight hundred students after three years by starting with year seven in 2003, year eight in 2004 and year nine in 2005.

I do not know about the applicability of this research to larger schools, but it would be excellent for the new state community high school to take up the research while it has approximately three hundred students in its first year and make decisions about the organisation of its participative decision-making accordingly so that the arrangement can respond as the school grows. The school certainly has the opportunity to subsidiarise as it expands. It already does this organisationally in year groups. The subsidiary groups of children have their own permanent learning area and their own team of inter- and multi-disciplinary teachers who visit them for classes.

Could this research apply to medium sized state schools? It possibly could, depending upon the definition of small or medium. On the basis of this research I would suggest that the middle school subsidiarises on the principle of neighbourhoods, so that families will be kept together and local community (and perhaps street or block) development can potentially flow with the school community’s activities. There is no particular educational argument for grouping children together on the basis of age or even ability. Substantial research into sustainability in medium to large schools is required. Some research into the capacity for sustainability in a larger school through innovative decision-making processes is in progress resulting from the current research (see, for example, Wooltorton and Kidd, 2003).

I suggest that the notion of the school-as-community that is recommended in this research has much to offer children from disadvantaged backgrounds who do not have access to social capital consistent with the values around which the school is constructed. Smyth, W.J. (2002) writes that success in school depends upon “supportive ties” which lead to the possibility of more relational power. He proposes the development of a “socially just school” in which high levels of teacher-based social capital are required. Smyth writes that “institutional relational resources” take the form of teacher guidance and information about personal and academic decisions, emotional support and encouragement and extra help with schoolwork. The important point is the
development of constructive, supportive social relations to break down the opposition between the values held by the children and the values of the teachers.

Smyth, W.J. (2002) sees socially just schools as sets of empowering social relations which connect teachers and children and help children succeed in the face of the neo-liberal reforms around testing which stratify schools and reinforce the advantages of the privileged and confirm the marginalisation of the poor. In considering a wider view of the school-as-community, there is potentially a much wider group of people able to support the children through the school community. This perspective would considerably broaden the role of the teacher in developing the community and bridging the gap to disempowered parents. This is already the case in many schools where part of the teachers’ task is to organise regular and on-going activities which will make the school a welcoming learning culture and place for parents and other supportive community members.

8.2.4 The Industrial and Ethical

The extra teacher work as community engagement gives rise to a complex of industrial and ethical issues. Where and when does a teacher’s work start and finish? I suggest that there are deep and unclear contradictions between the industrial and the ethical. It is clear that ethically much more ‘work’ is required to participate in a school-as-community with the extra community organising responsibility than a standard, narrowly defined school. Radical ecology advocates care – for others, for nature and for self. I suggest that a central perspective in preparing for a socially and ecologically just school is the ecological self of all participants including the key full time role of teacher. An exhausted teacher operating by constricting her/his ecological self and rushing everywhere can only model habits of business-as-usual. In a community, burn out is a common cause of spiralling down and steps need to be taken to address this through participatory processes at the outset. I suggest that teacher support by community is one of the many justifications for school-as-community.

However, teacher support by community gives rise to different industrial and social issues related to the work of paid staff and volunteers. It is easy for unpaid workers to
feel exploited: “you get paid for doing this and I do not”. This is connected to a range of other tensions which need addressing, such as the role of age-as-wisdom and experience in the community. Sometimes community members with much practical knowledge and wisdom about community need vast amounts of sensitivity and respect from young, particularly energetic new teachers with new university qualifications who would like procedures, routines and physical structures to be changed immediately. Likewise new graduates need to see themselves as new community members willing to learn its culture and idiosyncracies, rather than as empowered individuals who can advise, command and reorganise community members. This tension is similar to the democratic dialectic in the situation where the leader can be a coach or mentor, or hierarch. The one with practical community knowledge and wisdom can also be a coach or mentor, and reciprocally, so can the new teacher in areas of curriculum. Communicative relationships of trust and mutuality are required for learning and need to be intentionally learned.

Could the community quality of Forest School exist in a state school? It certainly could, in the many small state schools in the south west of WA and most likely in other small state schools. Could the cooperative inquiry research take place in a state school? Unequivocally yes in situations where the group size is limited to human scale. I suggest that as a starter all school community committee meetings including staff meetings, intentionally be participative and cooperative rather than formal and hierarchical. This means that extensive ongoing professional development for teachers and parents around the social, ethical and industrial quandaries and tensions of participatory decision-making would be required as soon as a school decides to orient itself towards sustainability. It also means a commitment to transformation by engaging with the complexities, tensions and contradictions around being human in an increasingly dangerous world.

140 This is a reformist approach to dealing with injustice – to teach the children of the poor to overcome oppression. The radicals also advocate a removal of the structures of injustice. Nonetheless, where structures cannot be removed, the only ethical response remaining is to teach the oppressed to address it.
8.3 Research to Address Barriers In Education Department Schools

In 2002, nearly thirty years after the Karmel Report which first recommended devolution of school management to Australian schools, it is very heartening to know that in Western Australia at least, meaningful progress seems to be happening at the current time. Twenty Western Australian Department of Education schools of varying types: high schools and primary schools, new and old, remote and urban as well as an education support centre have participated in a Local Management of Schools (LMS) pilot project. The project was evaluated by Estill et al. (2001) after one year of operation. A summary of the project reports:

It is recommended that pilot schools be encouraged to actively pursue innovative approaches to the membership and roles of school councils and that this be supported by Central Office (Estill et al., 2001).

The evaluation is quite positive, reporting that LMS is a powerful school improvement tool. It found that schools increased their efforts to meet the local school community needs through establishing community input into decision-making. Perhaps most importantly the evaluation reported that the LMS project made staff and school communities more aware of the flexibility within the system. Overall the evaluation found enthusiasm and satisfaction amongst participants in the study (Estill et al., 2001).

Finding 6.6 of the LMS Evaluation Report titled: “Changes in Management Responsibility” is of considerable relevance for this dissertation. It says:

Much of the success reported to date has been credited to the commitment of school staff, principals and communities. Many positive comments were made about the enthusiasm and effort of teachers in delivering improved learning outcomes, serving on councils and other committees, taking on additional tasks including increased management responsibility and building better relationships with parents and local communities, often through extra-curricular activities. Comment was made that the majority of this work was unpaid, although there may be other benefits such as adding value to their professional standing. Concern has been expressed that this enthusiasm and commitment should not be exploited and care should be taken to avoid burn-out. (Estill et al., 2001, 62, 63, my emphasis)

The report recommended greater professional development for all staff involved at schools, district offices and Central Office before expecting them to take extra
responsibilities or changing their roles. It also reported that:

In addition, the Department needs to be prepared for some inevitable difficulties in schools as more control is given to the school community. Some mistakes or difficult situations will inevitably arise and may need to be allowed to be resolved locally. The process of devolving responsibility does carry some additional risks with it which can be managed but not eliminated. However, the stakeholders involved in the pilot project are nearly unanimous in their views that if properly managed, the potential benefits outweigh the risks. (Estill et al., 2001, 62, 63, my emphasis)

These outcomes confirm my research findings which show that commitment to the process is extremely important, considerable extra time is required, the potential for burn-out is high, mistakes and difficult situations inevitably arise which require participative, non-hierarchical forms of resolution. The closing statement, that the potential benefits outweigh the risks, is significant. It is also significant that the report applauds movement along the continuum towards increased community participation and generally recommends greater engagement of the community through innovative approaches and increased professional development opportunities for all staff. This would suggest a social democracy view of participation for the participants at the periphery, within the schools and also for the people in Central Office who deal with the school people. However, the report does not recommend changing accountability structures or the devolving of further responsibility or increased funds. This leads to the implication that schools will be expected to do ever more with less. The market view of participation for the centre raises the likelihood of continuing conflicting expectations between the centre and the periphery, and continuing instrumental self management. The structural contradiction described above is likely to remain.

The report identified a number of areas in which confusion over expectations between central office and the schools was occurring, for example a general overall reluctance to accept a changing ethos, red tape and central office bureaucracy were identified as issues of significance for pilot schools (Estill et al., 2001, 60). The issue of social, industrial and cultural change was referred to a number of times in the report, such as:

It is recommended that specific professional development opportunities be provided for principals of pilot schools which include the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively undertake local management. (Estill et al., 2001, 61)

They also recommend a review of the changed roles of school and central office staff
(Estill et al., 2001, 62) and training for community representatives (ibid., 60). In their analysis of issues and their recommendations, the writers anticipate the emergence of significant issues when a large number of schools begin to participate in local management. For example, “the real test will come when a larger critical mass of schools challenge the status quo” (Estill et al., 2001, 58).

Estill et al.’s anticipated problems are based upon acknowledgment of the impact of massive restructures that have been implemented which demand vastly different roles and relationships at the schools level. Some of the issues are based upon opposing views of participation, each of which have contradictory implications in terms of relationships between staff members and between staff members and community members. Even with these embedded issues and difficulties as a whole the movement towards increased community participation in Western Australian government schools is commendable. The publication of Estill et al.’s research and easy availability of the report to schools (free distribution), is very important because the issues can now be openly discussed among teachers and systemic research efforts to address them can be developed. This is potentially an important part of the process of recreating schools as socially and ecologically sustainable communities. Very slowly, education policies and frameworks seem to be progressing in this direction with the proviso of the structural contradiction referred to earlier.
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