

Chapter 3 Clarification of my ontological and social values in living-boundaries

In this chapter I will clarify my values, which are at the heart of my living-theory praxis. These are values, imbued with life-affirming and life-enhancing energy, clarified as they emerge in living-boundaries, and forming my explanatory principles and living standards of judgment. They are lived in the sense I unconsciously express them in what I do and the way I am. As I do not exist in isolation, I recognise my values as living as they are held, formed and re-formed in that complex ecological living-boundary that comprises self, other/s and the world. I use three forms of narration: text, image, and multimedia, to communicate as fully as I can the relationally-dynamic qualities of my values. In the process of communicating my ontological and social values I further clarify the nature of living-boundaries I introduced in the previous chapter on Living-Theory praxis.

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3.1 My ontological values of loving recognition, respectful connectedness and educational responsibility

To share with you my meanings of my relationally-dynamic and energy-flowing values is not a simple matter as the vehicles we have for communication through time and space are limited. I make use of three forms: images, text and video. I want to use these different media to offer different lenses to view my meanings. What I am trying to communicate is not simply evidence of values expressed in a moment. The moment can only be understood in context of the complex ecologies of the cultural, social, personal histories and aspirations of individuals and collectives. Shirley Johnson expressed this eloquently:

‘A word carries a life time of experience’ (Shirley Johnson, 2006 - thanks to Kathie Souter, her daughter, for giving me this quote.)

The words I use may not change, but the meanings evolve in the process of living. I experience and understand the present in the context of a re-membered past and imagined futures. I say re-membered to make clear that the past is as fluid as the future, as Bartlett (1932) demonstrated vividly many years ago. His seminal work on memory shows numerous examples

of memory as a complex continually reconstructive, dynamic and inter-related personal, sociocultural and sociohistorical process. That memory may also be influenced by imagined futures is an interesting notion I have only recently been introduced to. The notion of ‘memory of the future’ (Schacter, Addis, & Buckner, 2007) draws on neuroscience and is consistent with what I am saying about the multidimensional and relationally-dynamic nature of creating understandings.

The first set of narratives is inspired by photographs I have used often when trying to explain what is important to me. I am no wordsmith and words alone have a tendency to lose connection with the lived and living reality of my practice so I start with these stories because images mean a lot to me. When I think of people I know I do not think of their labels. I think of them as the unique person they are; the images they conjure up in my head, the emotions they evoke within me, and the indistinct interconnectedness of their relationships with people, ideas and the physical world in which I live. When I talk about what is important to me I start there, and then go onto lexical descriptions.

The second set of narratives is text based. I find that focusing on articulating through text requires a precise attention to the words I use, which shape my thoughts, and improve the clarity and logic of my thinking. I believe this is important to enable me to improve my understanding of what I am doing and hence to improve my practice.

The third set of narratives is multimedia. My values flow with energy that is not adequately communicated through ‘fixed’ forms of representation such as image and text. While the meanings created and shared in the here and now, with people physically together, can never be fully communicated through time and space, a multimedia narrative, which uses image, text and video to stimulate the imagination and invite co-creation of understandings, is the best that can be managed at present.

3.1.1 Visual narratives



Figure 8 Participants at an APEX Saturday workshop

This picture was taken at a Saturday workshop I organised as part of the APEX programme¹⁸. I have used it many times on posters and in presentations as it reminds me of the quality of education that is important to me and provides an eye catching challenge to the preconceptions of those I work with. When I look at it, it brings to mind the buzz of small children filling a large school hall with their presence, in contrast to the rest of the school building, which has a hollow emptiness of the weekend. The floor is strewn with colour, fabric, materials, equipment and people. The space echoes with their humour, excitement and enthusiasm for what they are creating and who they are in communion with.

The image communicates to me the complexity of life that schools and authority have so much difficulty in being at peace with, and the surprises, humanity and uniqueness of people, which procedures of accountability seem to remove. That is what I want to achieve – to enable children to surprise themselves and others with the pleasure of creating the person they are and want to be in and of the world, the life they want to live, and the quality of the contribution they can make.

I want children to grow, able to live loving lives they find satisfying, productive and worthwhile. I believe I can contribute to the achievement of that ambition by creating educational relationships, space and opportunities, which support them growing as thoughtful and thought-full learners, knowing themselves, and with informing aspirations and the confidence and competences to pursue them, to contribute to enhancing their own learning and lives and that of others. I want children to experience the pleasure that comes from recognising and valuing themselves and creating and contributing something of worth. I believe that people, being social animals, get pleasure from feeling their unique self recognised and appreciated by others as a valued and valuable part of their lives. I do not think this is part of a barter system – a gift exchange - but a free flow between people where they truly offer the gifts they create and value without fear, veneer or expectation but with pleasure of the creation, and the intention and hope, that they will contribute to the well-being and well-becoming of us all.

It is interesting that on reflection I realise this photograph also represents the tensions and contradictions of the system and organisation in which I work. One of the reasons I use this photograph is because the child is not visible; I have no permissions to get, it is ungendered, and at first glance does not show either age or ethnicity. It is anonymous. Yet the basic values of education I hold concern the recognition of the individual, the valuing of their uniqueness, opening channels of respectful connectedness through which we can contribute our own distinct embodied knowledge and benefit from that of others, to co-create what would not be there without us. How can I express my educational responsibilities towards the other if we stay behind our masks? These are the tensions and contradictions I live and work with; a system driven by prescribed, impersonal targets, with progress described by numbers and teachers trained to train children and deliver received knowledge cost-effectively.

¹⁸I give a more extensive explanation of this programme on page 127

The picture of the child playfully sharing the mask they made in the ‘Colourful Nature’ workshop communicates something of the same qualities I experience looking at the picture below of Eden Charles and Alan Rayner. They are at the Monday evening conversations, facilitated by Jack Whitehead, which were held weekly at the University of Bath for likeminded people to share their values-based work to take their thinking forward.



Figure 9 Eden Charles and Alan Rayner in conversation

Here the space is filled with the warmth of the pleasure of people being in communion with each other, enjoying the educational relationships and the diversity of experience and interests each brings, the humour, a sense of being at ease in the flow of a creative conversation. When I bring this picture to mind I feel the delight of being with these people sharing themselves, their academic and intellectual gifts which hold their histories, their cultures, their emotions... their embodied knowledge of themselves in and of the world, the knowledge that constitutes the people they are when they are fully present with themselves and each other. The image brings to mind what I have learnt from and with them, engaging with their ideas, for instance inclusionality (Rayner, 2005), societal reidentification and guiltless recognition (Charles, 2007), and co-creating something new over time. I believe that I am communicating more to you of that space of educational relationships and opportunities by offering this photograph along with the words than would be possible through words alone.

The vibrancy of the space in the image is in contrast to the rest of the university building, which is beginning to darken and quieten with the evening. I want this feeling of an energised educational space, the pleasure of educational relationships, and the satisfaction of co-creating something of value, to be accepted and expected during the normal/regular ‘hours of business’ of establishments concerned with education.

Finally, I offer a collage created for a chapter in an edited book on gifted and talented education (Huxtable, 2008a, p. 295). This is the explanation I gave in a draft, 23 May 2007:

‘...I am not suggesting that life is, or could be, one big smile but I choose to focus on the pleasure as I tend to get what I look for and while I appreciate the inevitability of struggle, frustration, angst, toil... they serve a purpose which for me is in part communicated in these photographs; the pleasure of living a satisfying and productive life in a humane world.



Figure 10 Thanks to Ed Harker, Margaret Dobie in Laidlaw (2006), Joy Mounter and Belle Wallace for their photographs

I ask you to look at the images and experience the pleasure that I feel, and understand that I am trying to show you something of myself and not to comment on the individuals in the pictures. I have selected these images with considerable care; what does that communicate to you about my educational values? Look beyond what for me are delightful images. I did not take these photographs. They represent a focussed intention on the behalf of others to create, value and offer them. I do not believe that could have happened without the sensitivity and the developed talents of the educators who directly and indirectly contribute to contexts where pleasure can be expressed, where gifts can be created, valued and offered, and the requisite talents recognised and developed. I believe these images say more about the educational values and standards of judgement of the educators, including myself, than about the individuals whose images you can see.

These are brief moments, caught and transfixed as images which can be lost at the bottom of some dusty drawer, but I need to remember that the feelings and understandings communicated have become part of a living memory with the power to influence those you see and others, yourself included, who are beyond the lens.

Can I ask you to think how it might transform practice if we were to seek data in the form of photographs or video to enable us to research and communicate the quality of the dynamic and relational, the inclusional, gifted and talented educational experiences we want to hold ourselves accountable to?...

I hope that looking beyond the photographs helps you to understand a little more of what I mean by the space and music of an educational context of quality...'

This photograph (Figure 11), which is part of the collage, also has a personal connection. It was taken by Joy Mounter who I have had the delight of working with for many years. She had digital cameras available in her classroom and had one to hand at the moment when one of her pupils had understood something he had worked hard at, and another child recognised this and expressed their pleasure in the moment. Joy brought the photograph to share at the Masters group and subsequently included it in her Masters account in which she wrote:



Figure 11 Pupils of Joy Mounter

'This picture for me holds so much emotion and joy. It describes the journey to emotional learning and celebration in my classroom. The moment when two children shared their joy of learning and success at solving a problem with each other spontaneously. For me this is the assignment, 'the whole world in a grain of sand', a single moment. Learning independently, "We did it!" Child Q.' (Mounter, 2006)

I wrote (Huxtable, 2008b) what I felt communicated through this photograph:

'In this photograph, taken by Joy Mounter in her class, the boy has just learnt something he has been struggling with. The moment is shared and appreciated by the girl who expresses her delight with a hug. In this moment I see the pleasure of loving recognition and respectful connectedness between the children, the children and Joy. I also see this between these two children and Joy as part of the educational community she has created in the classroom. It is not just the physical boundaries that are relaxed but the emotional ones and I can feel the space charged with the emotional energy of pleasure given expression. Joy does not intrude but is included with the history of her relationship with the children. The boy in the background, smiling at the two, is also not intruding into the space created between the children in the fore-ground but is included in the wider space, with space and boundaries neither fixed or discrete. This moment is evidence of the quality of an inclusional gifted and talented educational space that Joy has created, and is, as she put it herself, 'the whole world in a grain of sand'.'

There is so much expressed in this photograph. For instance, the context is formal, the children are in a school uniform, yet the pleasure and moment is personal. How did Joy bring that about? Without the photograph I do not think the meaning of the energy would communicate, and the humanness of the educational space and relationships that Joy had created, the recognition of the children of each other, and the delight they share in what one child has struggled with and the gift of understanding that he has created, valued and offered himself. Each is offering a loving recognition of them self and the other and there is a respectful connectedness in the expression of an educational responsibility. The intra- and inter-personal living-boundaries may be tested but not violated.



Figure 12 Children enjoying life

This photograph (Figure 12) has also been important to me even though I do not know the children or the person who took it. It expresses so eloquently the mischievous delight of respectful connectedness that transcends time, space, cultures. Moira Laidlaw gave it to me. It connects me to the educational influence she has had in China where she was presented with the national Friend of China Award and made a life-long professor of Ninxia University, in recognition of her contribution to the development of action research with Chinese characteristics. It brings into relief the universality of the qualities I mean by an educational intent. There is a visual, albeit inadequate, expression of the energy-flowing, life-enhancing relationships within and between people. That, for me, constitutes the qualities of education I want to contribute to through improving my practice and the creation and offering this thesis as a gift.

3.1.2 Text based narratives

I re-told the story of my educational values in drafting a contribution to a final chapter of a book (Huxtable, Hurford and Mounter, 2009) which I co-authored with Joy Mounter (who has already been introduced to you) and Ros Hurford, a teacher who I have also had the privilege of working with and getting to know over many years. Both have also worked on the Masters programme with Jack Whitehead and which I have supported. They offer

the gifts of the knowledge they created through that programme on <http://www.actionresearch.net>.

At the beginning of the book Ros, Joy and I each told our story of our creative and philosophical thinking. In the final chapter we shared our learning stories, influenced by writing the book and what had happened to us during the period of writing it, I had to think carefully about my use of language, as the anticipated readership comprises newly-qualified teachers and those who have, for various reasons, not involved themselves with 'thinking', enquiry or research before. I am not placing this here as a 'compare and contrast' with the other narratives as a form of communication. I am offering it here to contribute to the communication of my meanings of my educational values.

I know there is some repetition of the previous narrative but I have deliberately left this in, as you, like me, now come to those phrases and words anew with the images and thinking of what has gone before. Neugarten (2003) claims there is no first look as we come to the first viewing with a huge cultural background, so that even our first viewing is coloured. His reflection that tabula rasa means an erased tablet not an empty sheet of paper, serves to emphasise there was always something there before. My intention in offering different forms of narrative is to extend the possibility of making what I am trying to say real to you, to creatively engage your imagination to weave generative connections with what is of importance to you as educator with a desire to improve educational practice, as well as to clarify my meanings for myself. This is an extract from a draft:

'I am reflecting back over what I wrote in chapter 2 [of the book] and the story I wrote which finished,

'I work from the premise that all children and young people hold within themselves the possibility of living a satisfying and productive life and the ability to make a valued and valuable contribution to their own life and the life of us all. I believe there is no predetermined limit as to what that contribution might be. I do not mean that I believe a child is able to grow up to achieve anything they might choose, rather I believe it is not possible to predict what they might achieve during their lifetime through the combination of opportunity and their determined inclination and commitment to realising their aspirations. My purpose as an educator is to open the imaginations of children and young people to the various possibilities of them living their lives in ways they find satisfying and productive and enable them to develop the confidence and competences to make and act on informed decisions as to what they want to do as they enter the adult world.

I believe the individual is the only one who can determine whether their life is satisfying and productive, and they do so

according to their own living values as standards by which to make such judgments.

And that is where I am now – trying to walk my own talk and learn from trying to understand and improve my own theories to explain what I do, contributing to improving the educational experience of children and young people.’

This still works for me. I have had a moment of revelation recently as to what my values are that explain and inform what I do in practice, and which form the basis from which I judge the standard of my work. It might sound odd to you when I admit that I have just begun to understand my values and my living theory but I think I am not alone; I have found many people often don’t really know what they are doing, and this is not only in education. The result is we are in a poor position to improve our practice and in no position to respond to the demands of others, for instance the government, professionally.

I think to ask the question, “how do I improve my educational practice?” makes the implicit assumptions that I know what my educational practice is, can give a reasoned and reasonable account for what I do and articulate the educational standards by which I evaluate it. For me that is the beauty of living theory research: there is an overt recognition that as an educator my values are my bedrock of researching my practice, and emerge through examining what I do. My theories are living in the sense that I am living them, and living in the sense that they are forever evolving in a complex context, which includes me, other people, society and the world. Understandings of living theory, are also living and I encourage those I work with to periodically revisit the <http://www.actionresearch.net> website and explore online, in print and in conversations, accounts that resonate, to see if they contribute to their own journey and inspire them to offer their own, as I do.

These are the values that have emerged through my practice that I recognise are core to me and which enable me to explain why I do what I do and enable me to hold myself accountable:

- A loving recognition
- A respectful connectedness
- An educational responsibility

I, like you, have constraints and targets, but these three phrases mean something real to me when I think about the quality of education and what I might do to improve my contribution. When I look back over the stories we have given you in this book I can see these qualities expressed, It is how I understand what a good educator does and what happens in an educational space and in educational relationships. I would prefer to be able to show you what I mean but will have to be content here to try to communicate through text, and

ask you to use your imagination to think of when you have experienced these qualities yourself as educator and student.

Loving Recognition

What do I mean? I mean recognising the person within, not just the shell but beyond to the possibilities that person may not see of themselves but would value if they did. Gert Biesta (2006) talked about the need for a language of education, and not just learning, and in that context bringing into presence that unique 'I', which I understood him to mean what it is that only I can say or offer, when 'I' is not replaceable by anyone else.

We spend much time telling children what they will become, their potential, what destiny is set for them, and so concern ourselves with 'underachievement' and teaching children to become 'better' learners according to some disembodied standard. It concerns me that we then seem to lose sight of the special and unique person within, the person who is more than 'a learner', 'a pupil', a label of one form or another.

I recognise the importance of stimulating and exciting children to explore and develop their confidence, skills and sophistication as knowledge creators. But somehow there must be a way of providing this in school in a way that enhances the child's recognition and valuing of themselves and their unique contributions to their own well-being and that of others. Categorising children and treating the labels seems to repeat and amplify the error.

I know when I experience a good educator. They offer me a loving recognition; the personal me inside that is trying, with the best of intent, to be the best I can be, feels recognised and sometimes they offer me an insight into who I am and can be that I do not see or understand myself.

This is what I see in Barry Hymer's (2007) story that he gives at the beginning of his thesis.

'In 2002 my book on gifted and talented learners was published (Hymer with Michel, 2002). It opened with a reflection on my last year of full-time teaching, and in particular my memory of an incident involving a Year 5 (ten-year-old) boy, known as Robert in the book:

Robert was a large boy, considered something of a bully by other children and he was challenging in the classroom. He had moderate generalised learning difficulties and he was functionally illiterate. And a few weeks before the end of the school year, I also discovered he was gifted. Not globally gifted, not outrageously or psychometrically gifted, but still gifted. I discovered his gift by accident. Our school had

been participating in the WH Smiths 'Poets in Schools' scheme, which had brought the poet David Orme ('Mango Chutney') to work with students across the entire Year 5 year-group. As one of their poetry-writing exercises, the children had gone out in small groups to explore – in great and close detail - the trees and shrubs adjoining the school's playing fields. They'd reflected, taken notes, drawn observational sketches, seen the trees and leaves and insects in new lights and from new angles, played with language, laughed and had fun. And then they'd returned to the classroom to knock their thoughts, notes, perceptions and reflections into poems. I'd been with Robert and his group throughout their time outside – mostly to manage his tendency to distract others – but back in the classroom my attention was shared with other members of the class. By the time I got around to Robert's desk, he'd managed an illegible sentence, in his typically tight, misspelled and dysfluent script. I asked him what he'd written and there was a long pause as he tried to make sense of his work. Then he replied, in a voice so slow and soft I hardly heard him: "Even the winter leaves have their own secret colours".

That was it. One line. But what a line! It was mid-summer, and Robert had found and studied a solitary, decaying winter-leaf. And in his observations and his slow reflections, Robert captured an image that contained a most deliberate metaphor. He was saying, I'm convinced, "Mr Hymer, notice me. I know I've not got a great deal going for me in school, but just sometimes, in some situations, I can do things that will amaze you". The children's best efforts were collated and published in-house in an anthology entitled, "Their Own Secret Colours". With the support of David Orme Robert introduced the anthology to the parents at the official 'launch'. He later told me it was the first time he'd ever been asked to do something important. Robert's moment in the sun coincided with a staggering change in his attitude and performance in school. He saw himself as a poet, as someone who – under the right conditions – could amaze with the power of his words. He still struggled to read and write and acquire new concepts at the speed of his classmates but the bullying pretty much stopped, the friendships and peer-respect grew, and Robert walked around the school and playgrounds with a real, deep and growing sense of self-confidence. He seemed caught up in a virtuous circle. And if that was the effect of Robert's self-perception, who was I to disillusion him? A few weeks later the term and school year ended. I left the school and the area and I've no idea what became of him.'

Fukuyama (1992) wrote:

‘Human beings seek recognition of their own worth, or of the people, things, or principles that they invest with worth. The desire for recognition, and the accompanying emotions of anger, shame and pride, are parts of the human personality critical to political life.’ (p. xvii)

I think he was right. I think this was what Albom (1997) was getting at when he described the influence of Morrie Schwartz, his college tutor:

‘I came to love the way Morrie lit up when I entered the room. He did this for many people, I know, but it was his unique special talent to make each visitor feel that the smile was unique.

“Ahhhh, it’s my buddy,” he would say when he saw me, in that foggy, high-pitched voice. And it didn’t stop with the greeting. When Morrie was with you, he was really with you. He looked you straight in the eye, and he listened as if you were the only person in the world. How much better would people get along if their first encounter each day were like this...?’ (p.135)

I know people who can walk into a room and bring sunshine with them. The teacher as a wonderful educator seems to be able to do this *and* find the sunshine in each child, and enable that child to enjoy what they have within and find the courage and enthusiasm to help it shine out for themselves and others to benefit from.

Respectful connectedness

Perhaps if I start with saying what I don’t mean this might become clearer. In traditional relationships there is a one-way connection between teacher and pupil/s with the intention of transmitting information. In ‘child centred’ classrooms there still seems to be on one-way connection between teacher and pupil/s but this time the power of control over the enquiry has shifted to the child while the teacher serves the function of providing them with information and skills that will enable them to do what it is they are striving to do. This is sometimes described as moving from being ‘sage on the stage’, to ‘guide on the side’. At times these relationships are appropriate, but I would suggest that there is an educational relationship that might be described as a ‘respectful connectedness’ where there is a recognition and respect for the contribution of skills, information, understanding, personal qualities... that teacher and pupils can make to the learning and enquiry where new knowledge is created. There is also a care and respect for each other’s boundaries. These boundaries are living and dynamic and when a teacher offers respectful connectedness they are sensitive to the boundaries of the pupils as well as their own.

This extract by Louise Cripps (2007) illustrates something of what I mean. She and four of her 10-year-old pupils are taking part at a day of collaborative enquiry and she writes:

'I really appreciate the flow of focused conversation between us all as we try out different understandings. The conversation also requires the learners to be understanding each other and their difficulties with understanding, and so there was a reflective quality built in.

There was no imposition by anyone on the others on the group. I felt that I, as a learner, wasn't pushed or rushed into being able to do something at the expense of really understanding it, and I also felt that the others in the group felt in the same position although we all had different levels of knowledge or understanding about the task.

Throughout the activity at the time, I was very aware of the way in which the knowledge and understanding was being woven throughout us all. This activity couldn't have happened without the relational flow between the learners in the group.

There was a real connection between the four of us as learners as the ideas passed from one to another.

Geraldine starts off with the knowledge, but wants to share it. It was her challenge to help us understand.

Louis very quickly shows that he knows what it was all about, and keeps testing what he sees against the ideas already in his head.

Edward quietly watches, and is given the space to keep working out what is happening. I am aware that at the beginning he is as puzzled as I am, but my perception is that he is seeking clarity in the same way as me. This is reinforced for me by watching the video, when near the beginning we unconsciously mirror the same kind of thinking body language. I am aware with Edward of a breakthrough moment when amidst all the chat; he quietly reaches out and picks up the cards to try something out. At that stage I don't think it quite works out, but Edward I think has found a new theory to pursue.

Also in terms of the dynamic of the group, each respects the learning of the other and makes space for it. I feel too, that there is real respect for each other as well as the learner. This activity isn't just a polite exchange of ideas, it is real collaboration.

There are separate conversations and exchanges happening throughout as well, but not to the exclusion of others in the group.

I want to know what Louis' understanding is because I am fascinated by what his thinking is, and he is able to articulate it. He wants to know what my thinking is because he wants to understand where I am, so he can show me more clearly how to understand. Although we all know each other, we haven't worked in exactly this way together before, and I'm thinking that it makes explicit the quality of relationship which must exist, and which I greatly value as an educator, but which I wouldn't take for granted.

As I watch the clip, I'm also fascinated about what the other learners bring in terms of their gifts, and I'm challenged about the importance of providing opportunities for the learners I'm responsible for to develop their gifts.

Louis has really appreciated the chance to work specifically with like minded people where he knows his ideas will be understood. Although he had developed an understanding very quickly he was happy to wait to explain what he understood. He gave that to the group, and helped us all develop our understanding in an inclusional way.

Geraldine gave us a clear demonstration, and was also very patient in helping us understand, and gave us clear pointers without feeling she had to dominate or be the one who knew. She too was able to read the group and each of us in it, and give us the space we needed.

Edward had the capacity to stay with the task, to listen and watch, and build his understanding in that way.

I feel pleased by my role in the group, as it's how I want to be as an educator. I'm very happy learning alongside others. I want people's ideas to be heard, and I want people to feel valued. I really enjoy engaging with the ideas of others, trying to understand what they're thinking by what they say. Like Louis, I find it helpful to know where people are in their thinking and understanding. As an educator if I know that, I can more readily help others move forward in their understanding, and as a learner I can move forward in my own thinking and develop my own understanding.'

This is much easier to understand if you viewed the video [Video 7, <http://tinyurl.com/3v7nqb5>] but I hope this account communicates something that resonates with you. There is a sensitivity that Louis and the children express in their relationships where the connections are channels through which there is a receptive~responsive flow of

communication. These are two definitions of 'respect' in the Cambridge on-line dictionary

- to treat something or someone with kindness and care
- to accept the importance of someone's rights or customs and to do nothing that would harm them or cause them offence

There is a quality felt in the connectedness, which I describe as respectful; there is a gentle warmth and good humour, good manners, an invitation is extended to offer, accept and co-create which can be declined without rancour, there is a consideration for self and the other, with attention for the well-being and well-becoming of all, and an optimism of something fruitful which may emerge from the engagement.

The challenge to the educator is how to exercise their judgment, while being nonjudgmental, as to how they bring their pupils into such a relationship. This takes time, skill, determination, courage and self-awareness on behalf of the educator, and trust and a willingness to contribute by the pupil/s. It also requires a recognition that the teacher's boundaries have to be much firmer and more distant with some pupils than others, and the boundaries with some children may be much firmer and more distant than the teacher would like, and remain so.

Educational responsibility towards...

If I am expressing an educational responsibility towards another I am acting with their best intent at heart. I will have to do so within the context of the best interests of others but I am focusing on the pupil's best intent. I know this is different to what as educators we usually say – that we work with their best interests at heart. I just wonder how often that means that what it is the pupil is striving for and their voice in their own learning and lives is ignored. I am still wrestling with that.

I think we often feel under pressure to respond to the demands of the institution or organisation for which we work. I remember vividly as a psychologist many years ago working with a girl. She was very capable of getting good grades in her SATs and I was trying to encourage her to do so. Eventually she turned round and told me she had spent a lot of time looking on the net for information and had thought about it very carefully. She had come to the conclusion that her SATs grades were of importance to the school for their position in the league tables but they were of no importance to her. She said she and her teachers knew the level of her skills and the quality of her understanding in the curriculum and she would get onto the courses she wanted. She was right. However, this is a very complicated and difficult decision to make as to when it is my educational responsibility to 'push' a child to do something they may not want to do but is genuinely in their best interest and will

equip them with the confidence and competences necessary for them to realise their best intent. I don't think there is a universally correct answer but I do believe that this is a question that should continually challenge the educator and to which they should be continually checking the appropriateness of their responses in respect to the children in their care.

The distinction I would particularly like to make is between an educational responsibility *for* and an educational responsibility *towards*. I don't believe that I can or should take responsibility for anyone apart from myself but I do believe I have a responsibility towards others by which I mean to help them make and act on decisions that will contribute to their own well-being and well-becoming and that of others and to learn to recognise and keep from harm.'

I have quoted at length from other people deliberately as the form and flow of their writing helps me to go beyond the words to the intangible essence of the values that they are communicating. In sharing with you their stories as stories that touch me and resonate with me I am also sharing with you something of my values and of me.

3.1.3 Multimedia narratives

Joan Conolly expressed the problem presented by text-based narratives:

I am so reminded of Eliza in "My Fair Lady" ...
"Words! Words! Words! Words!
I'm so sick of words! ...
Don't talk of stars shining above! SHOW ME!
Don't talk of love ... SHOW ME!"

Perhaps that is why I like Self-Study/Action Research/ Living Theories Methodologies (SS/AR/ LTM) so much! It's about showing WHAT we do and WHY and with what EFFECT. (posting on the JISCmail practitioner-researcher list 6th April 2010)

So here I want to 'show you' the energy-flowing values that form my explanatory principles and living standards of judgment of my practice. As you engage with these narratives I ask you to bring with you the understandings you have created through the visual and text narratives of the three ontological values I have been focussing on:

- A loving recognition;
- A respectful connectedness and
- An educational responsibility

In the construction of a multimedia narrative I draw on text, image and video. As you engage with this section of my thesis I feel a concern. This form of evidence may not be familiar to you and as a consequence there is the risk you may refuse to take the time to watch the videos. However, I do

not believe the significance or originality of my thesis can be understood unless you do so.

I hope you will not take it as an aggressive insult if I say this bluntly: I believe that a response to Schön's (1995) call for a new epistemology requires academics, educators and others to be prepared to take the time to learn the skills needed to meaningfully engage with new forms of 'literacy' made possible with 21st century technology. Learning anything new can be a difficult and frustrating process and learning these new 'literacy' skills is no exception. As this is new territory there are few established 'tools' available, which can exacerbate the problem. However, I hope you find it a pleasure rather than a chore, to travel with me on this multimedia venture despite the additional effort it may require of you.

I will introduce three vignettes. The first is of Louise Cripps with three of her pupils at the collaborative, creative enquiry day for mathematicians that I ran a few years ago, referred to above. I will offer you here what was eventually published in Research Intelligence (Huxtable, 2009b) as I have included the rationale for multimedia accounts, the contribution they make to the creation of a new epistemology and the techniques for engaging with them. The second vignette is of Joy Mounter, to whom you were introduced in the first story, with three of her pupils discussing the TASC¹⁹ Wheel (Wallace et al., 2004) at the end of a busy Friday. The third is of me presenting a paper (Huxtable, 2008b) at the BERA conference where I have told you I was able to articulate my values for the first time.

3.1.3.1 Louise and Louis

The first narrative is within an account published in the British Educational Research Association Research Intelligence. As it is still the best introduction to engaging with multimedia narrative I have created I will share it with you here in its entirety (Huxtable, 2009b):

‘As an educator, my lived and living educational values form the explanatory principles of my practice and my living standards of judgment in appraising my work.

They are at the core of my being, and are unconsciously expressed in what I do and the way I am. I do not exist in isolation and my values are relationally-dynamic being held, formed and re-formed in that complex space between self and other/s. To communicate, those values and the educational influence I am having, requires a form of representation beyond the possibilities offered by traditional academic writing.

I agree with Whitehead (RI105) in responding to Bruce Ferguson (RI102), Laidlaw (RI104) and Adler-Collins (RI104) that enhanced by the diversity of global cultures, what counts as educational knowledge in the Western Academy is gradually transforming. I also agree

¹⁹ TASC – Thinking Actively in a Social Context

that, '...the forms of representations used in BERJ are too limited to communicate the energy flowing, explanatory principles that can explain educational influences in learning' (Whitehead, 2008a, p. 29); new forms are needed which can help us to communicate our understandings and contribute to an educational knowledge base.

My work in an English local authority, coordinating and developing inclusive gifted and talented educational theory and practice, contributes to the realisation of the local authority's inclusive values expressed in the statement, "We want all Children and Young People to do better in life than they ever thought they could. We will give children and young people the help that they need to do this".

Education is concerned not with inanimate objects with predefined potentials and fixed relationships, but with emancipating a person, as learner, to improve her/his own well-being and well-becoming and that of us all. My research, and that of the educators with whom I work, is therefore concerned with describing and explaining how we are improving educational contexts, space and relationships, which particularly relate to enhancing the educational experiences of each unique person in our school system.

BERJ in its present form cannot help develop the educational knowledge-base that we, and other educational researchers, are generating in terms of our energy-flowing and values-laden explanatory principles. As Eisner (2005) said:

Human beings are, after all, sentient beings whose lives are pervaded by complex and subtle forms of affect. To try to comprehend the ways in which people function and the meanings the events in their lives have for them and to neglect either seeing or portraying those events and meanings is to distort and limit what can be known about them. (p. 116)

I agree with Whitehead that the BERJ needs to grow into a form in which the representations of these very human qualities that educational research is concerned with can be communicated and understood.

Quinn (1997) talks of the need to decentre: 'Decentring is a vital idea. It is the achievement whereby I learn what it is that you need to hear or experience in order to share what is in my mind, whether it be a question, an idea or a supportive anecdote.' (p. 86)

My living educational values are dynamic and relational and are not adequately communicated through 'fixed' forms of representation. For me to 'decentre' and communicate I ask you to read first the following text and see what sense you make of it. Then read again while engaging with the still image and recognising where your understanding is enabled as your focus moves between the people and the space and the text. Finally I ask you to engage with the text as you

watch the video clip with an awareness of where you are pausing and scrutinising a still image, moving the cursor back and forth and replaying sections of the video, re-reading text, and moving between the text, stills and video. It's complicated. How we make sense and create understandings is complicated. I find it helpful to use Rayner's (2005) notion of inclusionality; a dynamic awareness of space and boundaries as receptive, responsive and co-creational.



<http://tinyurl.com/3v7nqb5>

**Video 7 Ostensive clarification
of ontological values**

What follows is part of a video narrative in which I try ostensibly to clarify the meanings of my educational values of, a loving recognition, a respectful connectedness, and an educational responsibility, as an example. The context is a day when children and teachers have come together for a day as co-learners, facilitated by a mathematician and an educator, to experience what it is to enquire as a mathematician.

So, to begin.

The video [Video 7] for which ethical permissions were sought and given is on <http://tinyurl.com/3v7nqb5>

I have watched this 6-minute video many times and each time there is something special about it, particularly in the relationship between Louise (teacher) and Louis (pupil in the foreground). If, using Jack Whitehead's technique (Whitehead, 2008b), you run the cursor back and forward you may share with me a sense of the flow of a respectful connectedness between them. Each is respectful of the emotional, physical and personal boundaries of each other and the other two children. There is sensitivity between adult and children not to impose but to offer and invite. The space between them changes in a flowing 'dance' as they move – back to invite, in to engage. Louise' loving recognition of Louis, appreciating and valuing his intense desire to share, to inform, to engage the group and particularly Louise, in creating an understanding. I see her loving recognition of Louis as she enables him to express his educational responsibility towards her in his desire to bring her to a point of understanding that satisfies her. In that, Louise is expressing her educational responsibility towards Louis.

I believe that in allowing Louis to bring her to an understanding Louis deepens his own understanding of mathematics and of himself as

valued knowledge co-creator. I see Louis expressing a loving recognition of Louise. He does not engage her as authority, teacher or adult, but as the person she is, inquisitive, keen to understand, to enjoy the learning that emerges from uncertainty and the pleasure of being the educator she wants to be sharing a creative and productive space. The space between Louise and Louis is energised by their shared commitment to extending the other's understanding and the pleasure of being in good company.

I see in this brief clip Louise working to connect with the best intent of the other in mind, to help them understand, express and develop accordingly. (An expression of a person's best intent may not always be in their best interest; for instance, Korczak's (Lifton, 1989) best intent was expressed as he chose to accompany the children to the concentration camp and death.) The relationship requires trust, so the child can feel secure that the educator is trying to understand what their best intent might be and to learn, from and with them, as to how they might reach the point of determining their own path to live the life they want to live, mindful of their own best interests and that of others.

This is where I ask you to re-read the above engaging with the still image and text and then with the video and text. I ask you to consider as you do so whether the educational qualities, which I am researching, are communicated more fully as you engage interactively with the multimedia narrative rather than the traditional text alone.

I believe that I have communicated more of the relationally-dynamic qualities of my educational research through inviting you to engage with me in this brief interactive, multimedia narrative, than would otherwise have been possible. I may be wrong but I cannot test my claim in the current form of the BERJ. The e-version of RI, as Whitehead illustrated, is taking advantage of 21st technology, which will influence the educational epistemological transformations going on around the world. Can BERJ evolve a form that can build on this lead? As a contribution to answering this question I do hope that you will find it possible to participate in the keynote symposium at the BERA 09 Conference on Explicating A New Epistemology For Educational Knowledge With Educational Responsibility'. (pp. 25-26)

3.1.3.2 Joy and her pupils creating a new learning theory

I see the same attention and respect being shown in the video of Louise and Louis expressed in the video of Joy and her pupils. These three video clips (below) created by Joy Mounter (2007) and offered in her Masters account, 'Can children carry out action research about learning, creating their own learning theory?' have been shown many times around the world. Each time the educators are stunned at the sophistication of the children's thinking and their ability to articulate their learning theory in the process of creation as they critique TASC (Wallace et al., 2004). These children are only 6-7 years

of age and recognise the multidimensional, relationally-dynamic, flow of learning, which is not appreciated in most of the two-dimensional, linear text-based representations of the 'grand theories'. Joy wrote:

'The children I had in my class last year consider themselves expert learners, beyond their age, they are confident to lead others and share their thoughts. We have called them 'Learning Coaches'. The children and I were invited to share our experiences at a day's training on TASC run by Belle Wallace. The children weren't worried, rather pleased and excited to be sharing their 'learning'. Photographs were taken and even a video recording made of their thoughts of the TASC Wheel. This is an incredible short extract of the children developing their thinking, expressing their reflections and clarifying their ideas to develop an adults 'learning theory'. (Please see appendices two) By expressing their thoughts and feelings to adults, the children felt a sense of value as having something important to say. They received an e-mail from her thanking them and asking for photographs and more details of their work. They glowed.'

Following this we are having visitors in to watch Creative Literacy from our Primary Learning Network. This again the children met with enthusiasm and are becoming more confident that the world outside of our school is listening, really listening to their message. And recognising that it is important.'

In the picture below, you can just see Joy as she listens carefully to the children. She has taken them into her confidence about her own intention of learning with and from them. These 15 minutes on a Friday afternoon can only have happened in the context of the relationship she has already developed with them, the language, skills and understanding of learning they have developed with her support and involvement over time. I hear in her voice an honest respect for the children as valued creators of knowledge as she checks with them what they are meaning. This is the first of three clips where you can see the ideas move between the children. Each responds in a way that is meaningful to them and enables them to communicate with the others.



<http://tinyurl.com/3ogda8w>

"...then you get the question in your head... it is actually the questions you might need to answer not exactly the answers 'cause you need to think sometimes for yourself."

Video 1 Relationally-dynamic qualities of energy-flowing values

I do not believe that a transcript of the videos would adequately communicate either the dynamic quality of the learning theory they are creating or the educational qualities of the space they are contributing to. I ask if you see what I see as you run the cursor back and forth as you watch the videos in QuickTime. I believe I see the dynamic relational qualities of a loving recognition, respectful connectedness and an educational responsibility expressed.

3.1.3.3 Showing myself living my values

I am often accused when I am talking, of starting half-way through what I am thinking. Here I would like to start at the end, so to speak, to set the scene with these notes I made to myself for one of my numerous drafts of this thesis:

‘I think I have understood what I am about. The penny has dropped, the light has come on and the fanfare has sounded – in my head at least! I can explain, rather than just describe, why I do what I do – such as why I choose this psychological theory rather than that, why I bring some people into space and not others... I recognised before that there was a consistency to who and what I related to but I could not give a logical explanation that satisfied me. I think it is that lack of reason that can result in some people hopping from one exciting new initiative to another, always thinking the next holy grail is the answer with no way of discriminating between what is educationally a waste of time or what, with a bit of imagination, could be really useful.

So – I have explanatory principles that I can communicate; the reasons I use to make decisions I believe are reasoned and reasonable. I will return to say what I mean by educational, reasons and reasonable later. But for a moment, enjoy my pleasure at being able to articulate, put into a few simple words, my reasons that enable me to explain why I do what I do as: a loving recognition; a respectful connectedness and an educational responsibility towards the other.

These are my ontological values. Not just any old values but I mean the bottom line – what is really important to me and has no base to rest on other than me saying – this is what I believe and this is where I stand. Not only do they enable me to explain why I do what I do they provide me with standards of judgement by which to evaluate my work. As my values are living so my standards of judgment are living (Laidlaw, 1996). I will come back to that too.

Now with so much living I need a form of evidence that communicates the relationally-dynamic nature of what I am about. I can describe a loving recognition, a respectful connectedness and an educational responsibility towards another, in text. Some poets and novelists can bring those written words to life with metaphor and other devices. Writing however is not my forte and I need other

forms to communicate my values expressed in practice to those at a distance, either spatially or temporally; visual images, and particularly video, help considerably to assist the words to reach places otherwise untouched. As Lather (1994) quoted in Donmoyer (1996) points out we can never really represent our reality, but creating a narrative with video comes closer than other forms.

So that is what I mean by creating ‘a multimedia narrative’ to explicate my ontological values as explanatory principles and living educational standards of judgment.

There is rarely a single moment that can be identified, one being connected and influenced by another, but this is one I can identify and provide a multimedia narrative of. It was when I was preparing and presenting a paper at BERA 2008 (Huxtable, 2008b) that I began to recognise and articulate with some clarity my ontological values of a loving recognition, a respectful connectedness and an educational responsibility towards others. I drafted and redrafted the paper many times before the conference, each time inching a little further forward in understanding the question that I had posed and working with the reviews from BERA and the responses of Jack Whitehead and Moira Laidlaw.

The evening before I was to present the paper Jack asked, “what is it you want to say, the key point you want to focus on that excites you and you want to test out with your audience”. Good question! I waffled around a bit, and each time he pressed a bit more, what did I mean by... what am I trying to say that is important to me... the more I realised I didn’t know, until I heard myself saying the same thing over and over, albeit in slightly different words, with increasing exasperation and irritation. I realised that most of it was a description of my practice, not explanation. I realised I could not explain because I had no principles by which to offer such an explanation. As I read and reread what I had written and went around the houses trying to respond to Jack, I finally found what was there and what was not there. What was devastating was the discovery that I had written a nice paper – which did not answer the question in the title. In those depressing hours struggling to rewrite the paper I found what I had been searching for over years, and an appreciation of why I have been so insistent that Living-Theory is not just ‘another approach’ to action research. In the rewritten paper I wrote in the introduction:

‘To ask the question, ‘how do I improve my educational practice?’ makes the implicit assumptions that I both know what my educational practice is, can give a reasoned and reasonable account for what I do and the standards by which I evaluate it.’ (p. 1)

I have known that when I have challenged myself on those implicit assumptions I have not, until now, been able to respond from a place of knowing. I could give a good description of my practice but not an explanation, and it is that which I find to be the weakness in most of the research I come across.

I finished the paper with:

‘I have tried to clarify what I mean by developing inclusive and inclusionary gifted and talented educational theory and practice, described the educational gifts of educators, how I seek to enhance their catalytic validity, and how I am supporting educators developing their talents to create, value and offer their educational gifts whilst responding to the national gifted and talented education strategy.

I hope that my paper communicates my understanding of my practice as an expression of a loving recognition, respectful connectedness and my educational responsibility towards the educators, children and young people, in my authority, both as ontological values as explanatory principles and as living standards of judgment.’(p. 18)

It began to dawn on me that I had a found clarity about what I was doing and the basis from which I could explain and judge my practice.

The next ‘AH!’ moment came when I faced a small audience the following morning to present that paper to, including, worst of all, people I knew and respected. To make a fool of myself in front of strangers I will probably never meet again is one thing, to do so in front of those who I know and respect is another. On the positive side, I knew they wouldn’t give me patronising platitudes if I fouled up and their critique would be helpful.

I usually find it extremely difficult to be succinct and clear, particularly if I have to talk without prior scripting of some form. This time the technology did not work and I had to abandon what I was going to do and yet I surprised myself; the words came and I felt that the meaning of my values as I experience and live them communicated beyond the ‘words’ alone. I was told afterwards that I had been comprehensible to others too, including someone who said he now understood what I had been talking about over the years when he was my line manager!

As I got up to present my paper I realised I couldn’t use the few images I had brought, there was no net connection and I had no script. I thought ‘this is going to be a fiasco!’ and didn’t want a record, let alone have to look at the video of it afterwards. I deliberately turned my back to the camera as I got up in the hope that Jack would give up and turn it off. That strategy did not work, and that was just as well, as the data have proved invaluable.



Video 9a Expressing embodied living values

<http://tinyurl.com/3fg34wy>

As I look at the video clip of my presentation of the paper I begin to experience and comprehend how I might be communicating to others a loving recognition, open channels of respectful connectedness and an educational responsibility towards others.

It is here that I would like to ask you to take time out of reading to look at the video of that session. It runs for 20 minutes in total and while I will analyse one section I want you to have the whole context and a taste of the experience of the participants to place that short clip in. I would like to ask you to attend to not only my words but also to the tone of my voice, the movement of my body in the space and with an awareness of the other participants that form that space. The people I specifically refer to I know well and I see weekly at the Improving Practice Conversation Café.

Eisner (1997) said:

‘How do we display what we have learned? What forms can we trust? What modes are legitimate? How shall we know? Those questions and how we explore them can help redefine what educational research means, how it is pursued, and what we can learn from it. It can enlarge our discourse and widen our conceptions.’ (p. 9)

I believe that the forms of evidence needed include video to help communicate the relationally-dynamic nature of educational values. I find it personally most uncomfortable to have to look at myself but I do so in the belief that if I am to understand what I am doing and how other people experience me I cannot avoid it. I have spent years as a school psychologist using checklists and various approaches to behavioural analysis and found nothing that communicated the real qualities of ontological values.

For the multimedia narrative to communicate I believe I need to work hard to ‘decentre’, as Quinn (1997) describes it. He also points out that this is ‘very, very hard’ and is not often broached in school. I will go further and say it is not often broached anywhere else either. Quinn quotes Wood (1997):

‘Being relatively inexperienced and lacking expertise in the task of analysing and evaluating their own and other people’s verbal communications, most young children assume that failures of communication are necessarily the fault of whoever is listening.’

I suggest that this trait is not just that of young children, I, like many adults, also have a long way to go, and am particularly mindful dealing with an unfamiliar medium. I find that in trying to communicate to others more effectively I am improving my communication with myself and have begun to listen more attentively to what I and others are saying and to keep trying to go beyond the words to the feelings and implicit understandings.

Some people seem to find it hard to accept reflections that show they are negating their values, and some the reverse. Neither response is helpful to improving practice. A major point of learning for me has been to hear reflections that say I am living my values, with the same dispassionate equanimity as being told I am living a contradiction. So, to practice what I preach, I focus on the end of the BERA presentation and offer this analysis in the video (Video 9b, analysis in the video) <http://tinyurl.com/3pl23um>, revised following Anat Geller’s (an Israeli educator) response. I wanted to excite my audience to comprehend... accept... believe... and engage their imaginations to go beyond the ideas I was offering. As you watch the video do you hear me articulate my ontological values and feel the embodied meanings of those values communicated? Is what you hear, see and sense of my values consistent, or do you experience me as living a contradiction?

You may want to pause here and ask yourself why you do what you do and what values you want to express as fully as you can. What is it that you do that gives you a sense of living a loving, satisfying, productive and worthwhile life? How do you communicate your values? Have I communicated the energy-flowing nature of my values so that we share a developing understanding in the living-boundary between us?

I ask you to hold in mind what, I hope, I am communicating of my values of a loving recognition, respectful connectedness and educational responsibility, as you move onto the next section. I begin with a multimedia narrative to ostensibly clarify my meanings of inclusion, emancipation and egalitarian as social values. I next focus on my meaning of living-boundaries and the expression of values within those boundaries. I go on to show how my values form explanatory principles of my practice, improving educational relationships space and opportunities through collaborative, creative enquiry within living-boundaries.

3.2 Ostensive clarification of my inclusive, emancipating and egalitarian social values

I am presenting here a form of educational research that is grounded in a commitment to living citizenship (Coombs and Potts, 2011). By living citizenship, in the context of my research, I am meaning living inclusive, emancipating and egalitarian social values. I show how, in living these

values as fully as I can, I am generating the kind of educational knowledge that offers a response to the concerns of national educational research associations: BERA seeking to encourage the pursuit of educational research and its application for the improvement of educational practice and for the public benefit (BERA, 2010); AERA seeking to, ‘advance knowledge about education, to encourage scholarly inquiry related to education, and to promote the use of research to improve education and serve the public good’ (Ball and Tyson, 2011).

The words I use to ‘label’ my values may or may not change. However, the embodied meanings of those words evolve and are shaped by my experience of life and the knowledge I create of the world, myself and myself in and of the world. In that sense my lived values are living and relate to my social values.

There are times I find what I am doing is contrary to my values, either because of my ignorance or circumstances. At those times I experience myself as a living contradiction (Whitehead, 1989a) and feel a *dis-ease*; I can feel anxious, stressed, angry, distressed... or that vague uncomfortable feeling that things aren’t right but I can not put my finger on it. When I am in a sympathetic context, expressing my values as fully as I can in what I am doing, I can recognise a sense of well-being that Csikszentmihalyi (2002) describes as ‘flow’.

So, context is important, but not only to my sense of self and well-being. It is important in enabling me to understand the world I want to bring more into being by what I do. In other words, to be aware of and to clarify my social values, are integral to me understanding and living my ontological values and living a loving life that is not only satisfying, but is also productive and worthwhile. This is the process of creating knowledge not only of self, but self in and of the world as I research to improve my practice to create knowledge of the world.

I will return to the notion I have of ‘creating knowledge of the world, of self and of self in and of the world later particularly in Chapter 7 when I introduce a relationally-dynamic approach to research and developing praxis. Here I want to focus on communicating the meanings of my social values clarified, as they emerge through my research in living-boundaries. They can be ‘labelled’ as:

- Inclusive - to signify the importance I attach to each person valuing their own gifts and that of others, as the unique contributions each person develops and offers to enhance their own well-being and the common good
- Emancipating - to point to the importance of each person accepting and expressing their responsibility to enhance their own learning and life and that of others. While it is only individuals who can emancipate themselves, I recognise there are contexts that enable or disable, to a greater or lesser extent, the discharge of that personal responsibility for enhancing learning and wellbeing

- Egalitarian - to make clear the value I attach to it~we where the individual is neither subservient nor dominant to another, but each exerts their power *with* others and self, to co-create knowledge collaboratively to enhance the well-being and well-becoming of each and all

I can see the expression of my social values in my ontological values and vice versa: my inclusive social value is reflected in my ontological value of 'a loving recognition'; emancipation is reflected in educational responsibility; and egalitarian has resonance with respectful connectedness. I will return to this in the next section but first I want to focus on clarifying my social values.

The narrative below is of a session at the Improving Practice Conversation Café, a weekly meeting for local authority staff and others. In 2005 I was tasked with leading the development and implementation of the action research strand of the local Authority education development plan. As with all plans it has been consigned to history but it provided the ground for the Improving Practice Conversation Café to grow with the inspiration of Nigel Harrison, Jack Whitehead, Chris Jones and Kate Kemp.

The 'Café' has taken place weekly from 8am to 9am in a room in the local Authority offices. There is, and has been, an open invitation to anyone who wants to come along and participate in a way that feels comfortable and productive for them. Posters have been used to make this invitation visible, the images carefully selected by Sandra Harris to reflect our values and attract attention while the legend remains consistent to give an indication of what we do:

Come and join us for creative conversations about projects, ideas and daily work to improve our practice.

- ★ We share what is energising us.
- ★ We discuss how we are seeking to live our values at work.
- ★ We support each other as we develop and research to improve our practice.

People join as they find it of interest, and some leave as their focus changes or they leave the Authority. Some have been active participants over the years despite changing roles and responsibilities. These are the people I want to introduce here.



Video10 An expression of energy-flowing values in relationships and space

<http://tinyurl.com/4xzeu8x>

The 6 minute 21second video (Video 10) is of the Improving Practice Conversation Café held on 29 July 2010. From left to right: Chris Jones, Sandra Harris, Nigel Harrison, Kate Kemp and Jack Whitehead. I am behind the camera. Jack is inviting them to look at some video clips of members of the group, which show them living their values in different settings. The discomfort experienced in seeing self on the video is brushed off with humour as people focus on recognising the expression of their values. They are not looking to evaluate or improve ‘performance’ by which I mean how they are seen. The shared intention here is to enable us each to recognise and value expressions of values as living-theory researchers working to improve practice.

I am inviting you to look at a video (Video 10) of this session <http://tinyurl.com/4xzeu8x> (6.21 minutes if played in real time). I am not concerned here with what is being said but with the qualities of the relationships and space that is experienced so I ask you to watch in a particular way; the way you engaged in the previous chapter. Having loaded the video, run the cursor back and forth and look for points where you experience an empathetic resonance with the values being expressed. I ask you to be open to experiencing the relationally-dynamic qualities of inclusion, emancipation and egalitarian values being expressed. Do you see as I do an expression of the life-affirming and life-enhancing energy of those values flowing in the relationships and space as people create their own opportunities for learning?

For instance as I move the cursor back and forth:

Between 2.15 and 2.20 I experience a delightful flow of pleasure between the people in a space that I feel they experience as inclusive, emancipating and egalitarian. I can see in their gaze a loving recognition and respectful connectedness as they express their educational responsibility to each other.

Between 3.25 and 3.38 they are attending to an image of Nigel and Nigel's values as a manager of holding people in places of uncertainty. You can see the moment that Nigel recognises how he communicates his values of holding people. Others help to validate his observations by spontaneously mirroring back to him what they see in the video, not simply as hand movements but as an embodied expression of his values.

I see in this video evidence of space and relationships that are creative and collaborative as they enable valued knowledge of self in and of the world to be co-created. I have pointed to Nigel co-creating knowledge of himself in and of the world living his values. Nigel offers values-based explanations of his practice, for instance in his papers presented at BERA. He is working on his doctoral research programme. Chris's understanding of her embodied expression of values of inclusion is enhanced. She offers her values-based explanations of her practice in her Masters dissertation and also in papers presented at BERA. She has also embarked on a doctoral research programme. I believe you can see Kate living her values of 'an abiding regard' and she offers values-based explanations of her practice in her Masters assignments.

Between Sandra and Jack you can appreciate the diversity of experience and expertise held in the relationships and space of the Café. Sandra is a very competent Personal Assistant to the Head of Education Inclusion, Nigel, but is unfamiliar with research and academic work. Jack is an established academic and educational researcher who has been engaged in an ongoing programme researching his practice to make the embodied knowledge of educators public for over 40 years. Irrespective of their differences, Sandra and Jack bring their inclusive, emancipating and egalitarian values and embodied knowledge into the co-creative space of the Café.

Move the cursor back and forth between 2.26 and 2.38 and watch carefully for the speed of creative and collaborative connections made between everyone. This still image at 2.38 illustrates the nature of the connection I am trying to draw your attention to.



Figure 13 Chris, Sandra, Nigel and Kate

The expression of the inclusive, emancipating and egalitarian relationship is clear to me as I look at the connection between Sandra and Chris. In that moment, frozen in the image above, is an instance of the flow of loving recognition, respectful connectedness and educational responsibility between people. As they enquire as Living-Theory researchers, they co-create knowledge of self in and of the world in the living-boundary between them. The knowledge is embodied as well as intellectual; head, heart and body engaged in the process of enhancing educational learning of each and all.

And me? I live my egalitarian value in contributing to the co-creation of knowledge of self in and of the world as a silent presence on this occasion. You cannot see me, as I am videoing the session, but I hope you can sense my contribution to the creative collaboration, living my ontological and social values. I am expressing my values of inclusion as I ask you to focus on and value each person's unique gift of their talents and knowledge to enquire collaboratively to enhance practice in the local authority.

In taking and offering this video as an educational gift I contribute to the emancipation of each and all in their learning. I want to stress that this is a gift freely offered as an expression of my educational responsibility. I make no claim of ownership or demand for acknowledgement. To do so would for me be a violation of the love and trust of educational relationships and space I value and want to see expressed more fully in the world.

3.3 Clarifying values in living-boundaries

The Café takes place from 8am to 9am. The timing is not just for mutual convenience. When it began there was potentially destructive criticism by some who did not wish to participate and who did not want the opportunity for others to research to improve their practice either. I will not speculate on their motives but I found it curious that there were adverse comments particularly about the sounds of laughter that emanated from the meetings

and the pleasure and energy people brought out with them. The ambiguity of 8am – 9am, as being ‘in’ work time and ‘before’ work, helped to allow for creative, collaborative enquiry in uncharted waters to be developed within a target-driven culture.

Coffee and croissants add a feeling of informality for personal stories to be shared and the relevance to practice understood. I am distinguishing ‘personal’ stories as those expressions of the life-affirming values we each wish to live fully. These personal stories provide respectful insights into self and enable a loving recognition and respectful connectedness to develop within an educational relationship. I understand what is private to be that which a person does not want to be made public. There is no clear, set distinction as to what is private and what is personal. In my context the phrase, ‘too much information’, usually accompanied by a wry smile and shaking head and hand indicates that someone is crossing the line between personal and private.

Most of my practice is concerned with generating educational relationships, space and opportunities in living-boundaries. I shared some of my work in these living-boundaries in this chapter and in the process have begun to give you some insight into my work. For instance, I begin the visual narratives with a picture of a child at an APEX Saturday workshop and try to communicate the nature of the physical, emotional and intellectual space it offers children in the living-boundary between school and life. I begin the multimedia narratives with one set in a collaborative, creative enquiry day where children and teachers are co-learning as mathematicians. If you bring to mind the video of Louise and Louis I hope you have a sense of the living-boundary between them that is flowing with a life-enhancing and life-affirming energy and is inclusive, emancipating and egalitarian. That is the nature of the space I want to create by offering such events.

I have begun to clarify the nature of the social values that are an expression of the impersonal, yet life-enhancing, qualities of the common good that I sense in the description by Lee and Rochon (2009) of a complex ecology. What I think they miss is the presencing of a person living their ontological as well as social values as fully as they can. Similarly when a person talks only of their ontological values and is concerned only with creating a satisfying existence for him or herself I feel they create a barren wasteland in the boundary between self and other, rather than a living space for co-creation of knowledge.

3.4 Postscript

Through this multimedia narrative I have drawn your attention to expressions of my ontological and social values, which form the explanatory principles and living standards of my living-theory praxis.

In the expression of life-affirming and life-enhancing energy in a loving recognition of self and other, establishing respectful connectedness and

expressing an educational responsibility for myself and towards others I am understanding what it is to *live a loving life*.

In developing and offering talents, expertise and knowledge I value as gifts in the process of living my values as fully as I can I understand what it is to *live a satisfying life*.

In offering talents, expertise and knowledge as gifts that enhances well-being and well-becoming of each and all and making this a better world to be I understand what it is to *live a productive life that is worthwhile*.

I address gifts and talents as educationally influential notions and the development of inclusive gifted and talented theory, practice and provision in Chapter 5. First I offer you an account of the evolution of my living-theory praxis to exemplify what I mean by Living-Theory praxis.