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Educational Leadership Practiced As Both Art And Science: A Narrative And Evocative Autoethnographic Analysis

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EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP PRACTICED AS BOTH ART AND SCIENCE:

A NARRATIVE AND EVOCATIVE AUTOETHNOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

By

Kelly Card

Presented to the Graduate and Research Committee

of Lehigh University

in candidacy for the degree of

Doctor of Education

in

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Approved and recommended for acceptance as a dissertation in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education.

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The journey to completion of this project had many turns. When I first set out on this degree I was a teacher working in Kuwait, unmarried and single. By the time I finished it, I worked as a principal in South Korea married to my wife Phunee with a child, Kanin. I have much to be grateful for.

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Abstract

As if we live in two worlds, humans face a paradoxical situation. We have two fundamental and conflicting views of how to interpret and respond to reality. In the first and most dominant case we rely on objectively derived data describing the external world. In the second case, we have subjectively derived experience. The field of educational leadership has tended to polarize the two views giving preference to objectivity through strong advocacy of scientific methods, and short shrift to aesthetic methods with almost no effort to balance the two views. The purpose of this basic research is to seek a novel way of understanding the work of educational leadership using both objective and subjective orientations: leadership as both science and art. To observe the interactions between the objective and the subjective worlds, and to meaningfully communicate the findings the methodology needs to match data. The chosen methodology for this purpose is evocative narrative autoethnography, a method that focuses on the researcher (myself) as both instrument and site of study in order to investigate how I negotiate between my inner and outer world encounters. Putting this study in narrative form most closely matches the narrative structure of subjective experience, just as mathematical principals structure the material universe. Finally, I seek to produce a verisimilitude of experience so that the educational leader reading this study may have opportunity to vicariously experience the data and maintain the objective/subjective paradox in the reading.

Findings indicate clear evidence of the interplay of objective external conditions interacting with subjective internal conditions in a variety of circumstances. The truth of this condition is understood both intellectually as well as through embodied experience apprehended vicariously. The research has pointed to the value of seeing oneself within the context of the natural world. Balancing the external and internal worlds requires a recognition of the place of

nature in our institutions and of the value of illusion as a way of understanding, coping with and enjoying reality.

Chapter 1 – Introduction

If the reader would indulge me by a brief diversion, I would like to draw attention to a fairly well known image (see figure 1), that of the “Old woman, young girl” available from any Google search which I have included below (“moillusions.com”, 2015). The main point of the



Figure 1

picture is the pleasure derived from discovering that from one perspective the picture is an old woman yet from another perspective it is a young lady. The two impressions we have as viewers come from the same image and both interpretations of the image would be valid and justified though contradictory. What is valuable about this image to me is the fact that some people get stuck in one particular view about what

they are observing: they either only see an old lady and find it impossible to conceive what is meant by the young girl or alternatively they only see the young girl and cannot possibly conceive what is meant by descriptions of the supposed old woman.

This circumstance of conflicting perspectives is analogous to what I wish to investigate when it comes to the work of being a school leader. On one hand, there are those who believe there must be some material basis for understanding what is basic to the work of school leaders. To this view reality is best understood through empirical methods and subjectivity is interpreted as an externally observable phenomena. Contrariwise, others believe that empirical analysis will never adequately account for the work of being a school leader. Their preferred view is that

reality is best understood through one's subjective experiences which are considered fundamental. Empiricism, in this case is viewed as one among many forms of subjectivity (English, 2003).

Like the image of the old and young lady, I believe both of these perspectives on leadership in schools valid, though contradictory. These two exclusive perspectives indicate the existence of two separate but interpenetrating worlds by which we derive our clues to existence and both of them comprise the reality within which leaders work. The exclusive reliance on the material or the subjective worlds of information and action is a hindrance to full engagement with reality and the study I propose requires that I go deeper into the lived experience of both worlds so as to amend the distinctions normally made between the two. As I explore how both perspectives influence my work as a school leader, I hope to understand more how one might repair the divide, or more accurately, live the paradox that has typically been blamed on Cartesianism – a system of thought originating from René Descartes that formally adopts a dualism of mind and matter.

Though it has taken time to recognize its presence, I am now aware that I have alternately been stimulated, challenged and confused by the peculiar drama this condition of dual views imparts. From the time in early childhood when I was both angered and saddened to find that my mother did not believe I was magic, to the time in grade two when I ran my finger along the dust of our old blue Galaxy 500, wondering why I was the sperm that survived into childhood. Later, came the sweaty and tense adolescent discussions with my parents in which they railed about the fact that one needs to make money to get on in life and I best start preparing for reality. I swayed nervously on the antique wooden rocker defending my right to drink out of used peanut butter containers if I preferred. This drama lasted right up until my entry into the teaching profession

where I felt I had ‘given in’ somehow. Knowing my capability and how the interviews went I complained to my parents that I would probably be hired. I was hired, and I then continued to wrestle with the way in which teaching seemed to be shaping me, conforming me to its logic. I felt I was becoming a different person. “We are the Borg” (Berman & Frakes, 1996) I would sometimes recite in reference to a long past Star Trek episode in which the Borg did not conquer their enemies so much as they absorbed them into the communal brain. Thus no Borg spoke as an individual, only as an extension of one mind. I struggled against this sense of absorption and the more I struggled, the more I became imbedded like a fish tugging against a hook. I *was* hooked. I did come around to a full-on internal commitment of passion to education evolving within a few years into a display of leadership among my fellow colleagues. However, the tension between my subjectivity and the external conditions within which I lived and worked remained at odds.

Each of the above situations expresses the tension of perspectives I wish to investigate. One of my early favorite writers C.S. Lewis, a widely regarded theologian, scholar and novelist explains the condition from the viewpoint of the experiencer. C.S. Lewis spoke of looking at a beam of light and seeing the dust floating in it, or looking along a beam of light through a hole in the roof to observe trees blowing in the sunlight breeze as a metaphor to understand how we tend to divide knowledge into external (looking at) or internal (looking along) views. Lewis poses the question which I quote at length:

Which is the ‘true’ or ‘valid’ experience? Which tells you most about the thing?... It has been assumed without discussion that if you want the true account of religion you must go, not to religious people, but to anthropologists; and if you want the true account of sexual love you must go, not to lovers, but to psychologists; that if you want to

understand some ‘ideology’ (such as medieval chivalry or the nineteenth-century idea of a ‘gentleman’), you must listen not to those who lived inside it, but to sociologists.

The people who look *at* things have had it all their own way; the people who look *along* things have simply been brow-beaten. It has even come to be taken for granted that the external account of a thing somehow refutes or ‘debunks’ the account given from inside. (Lewis, 1970, p. 213).

Lewis argues that not all insider views may be debunked in this fashion. First, the outsider view lacks integrity from the outset because certain types of knowledge are only experiential. One cannot comment on pain, for example, if one has never experienced it. It is outside of the range of meaningful intellect. Second, outsider views of a thing are still themselves perspectives that can be viewed from another outsider view and similarly debunked. Lewis’s solution is that we must both look at and along if we are to avoid idiocy. In this study, I want to understand the tension of looking both ‘at’ and ‘along’ the life of educational leadership. It seems basic.

The paradox I refer to is so implicit that we may not even notice it. To the extent that it does come to our attention, we may even actively ignore it. Heller (2000) says that “the paradox remains unnoticed if groups which push in one or the other direction do so with the conviction that if they can only manage to do the right thing the ‘other’ will disappear” (p. 4). Yet if we wish to live with authenticity, the intersection between the external world and the internal world cannot be avoided. We are subjectivities living our lives inwardly, as well as outwardly. To get up close to this condition in order to study it requires that I look within my own personal experience. The place in which the subjective and objective worlds intersect is in live moments of personal experience, particularly those moments which may be described as either dissonant

or harmonious – each sensation indicating something important about the contact between inner and outer worlds.

In order to observe myself in these ways, the method I have selected is a combined narrative and evocative autoethnographic approach. The best way, according to John Dewey (1934), to communicate experience is by creatively evoking the experience. More will be said in the methods chapter regarding this choice of approach.

The following episode is provided as a sample experience that brings the study closer to its educational leadership home. It comes from a letter I wrote to my principal when I was a teacher. It is a reply to a lesson plan policy that was proposed perhaps two weeks previous at the school. The lesson plan policy was meant to be a guide that the school provides so that teachers have an idea what is expected at the school. But, the manner in which it was presented seemed to leave out the subjective element. Feedback was invited, so I wrote the following letter:

To Ms. Devora

Re: Lesson Plan Proposal

September 28, 2004

Dear Ms. Devora,

I thank you for the opportunity to convey my own feelings and reflections with regard to the lesson plan proposal. This indicates to me that you wish to draw upon the experience and intelligence of this professional body of teachers and that as a community we may have greater wisdom than the sum of our parts. Further to this, I must add that during the PD day itself, you seemed very able to facilitate our discussions and allay the concerns that we might have as they arose. I came away feeling very confident in your leadership on this issue and willing to jump onside and defend the cause should the need arise. I hope you understand that I feel very much a part of the team, though I have been here only a short while. My commitment is high, not only to the profession but to the kids,

their families, the school and even the greater community of Kuwait. I want my work / our work to count.

Let me begin by stating what I see as good about the proposal as it stands.

1. The basic outline seems pretty much standard. I don't think many could argue that any part of it is invalid. Each component seems a necessary part.
2. The flexibility you implied in the meeting that we do not necessarily need to follow the same order, nor even follow the same time constraints is an added necessity.
3. The fact that there is a high turnover of staff dictates a need to see that we are all on the same page and have some idea of the school's vision.
4. Though most teachers are well equipped to write lesson plans as needed, it is occasionally true that teachers may need help (re) establishing themselves competently and might benefit from this kind of guidance.
5. The fact that you referred to this document as a guide, not as a standard.
6. The fact that we need to please a number of educational bodies in order to credibly grant students their qualifications and teachers credit for their experience. This requires a mass of documentation including, no doubt, such things as expectations for lesson plans.
7. I am sure there are more benefits that I have not mentioned. Suffice it to say I support the cause.

All this being said, let me state that usually my complaint, if I have any, is not in what is *stated* but in what is *not stated*. I think that what we are looking at in this lesson plan document emphasizes the science of teaching while nearly completely overlooking the art of teaching and this is its largest fault. The unfortunate thing about this is that without giving due attention to the art aspect, one might come away thinking that the only thing valued at the school is the science. In isolation, there is little to fault in the document we have been given unless the document is to be the final statement on how lessons are to be developed. If this might be thought of as the final statement then I oppose it on a number of levels.

1. Lessons that are tied strictly to a "plan" rule out the human element, that is - emotion, intuition, good days / bad days, teachable moments, differences in learning styles, needs etc. Ruling out these factors may help with consistency but they severely restrict the relational dynamics of learning. An example of what I mean, though from different angle comes from my recent experiences with the kids. Through my last few weeks of working with the children I have come to see that they are lacking in a few areas, most particularly their reasoning skills. I now know that this is something we need to spend time on. I could not respond to this immediately and with effect if I were tied to a specific "plan." Now, the example I give refers more to an overall term plan, but the same could be applied to daily plans.
2. Lessons that are tied strictly to a plan emphasize one teaching style over many others. It is "as if" good lessons are equated with planned lessons. In contrast I would argue that it is not a good lesson plan, but a good teacher that makes

the difference. Otherwise the most effective approach would be to simply provide education on the net. Or, hire anyone, provide them with the lessons and let the plan determine the outcome.

3. Lessons that are tied strictly to a plan, might require of teachers that they spend most or all of their time documenting rather than implementing. It might be that if plans are required constantly and in detail that the quality of teaching might go down simply because the focus is shifted from teaching to “planning to teach.” Time is a limited resource, and we must always find ways to make the best use of the time that we have.

If my points are valid, it begs the question how then are we to proceed? We need to embrace the paradox of the art and science of teaching. Whereas Science seems to require a certain amount of control, art requires a certain amount of openness. Both of these may be pitted against each other, or alternatively they may be allowed to work hand in hand. I don't think there is a formula except that we need to attempt to hold the two approaches together in tension the science *and* the art. The teacher in the classroom must hold the tension through flexible planning and honoring her own intuitions, and likewise the Head-of-Department or administrator in their place of responsibility act similarly. As a teacher I know that there are formulas out there that support the various approaches to learning that students have. I imagine similar approaches are available to support the various styles of teaching that teachers have. What we cannot do is treat our teachers' needs in teaching with any less respect than we treat our students' needs for learning. We are too connected. To ignore the needs of one is to ignore the needs of the other. We are in a human institution and this requires a human approach. Thus my encouragement is that we continue to support the science of teaching (to the extent that anything has been truly proven) and at the same time give equal voice and time to the art of teaching.

Thankyou.

And have a great day!

Mr. Kelly

Science 7

The purpose of this study is to investigate an in-between land, or dynamic interplay of two foundational, overlapping and at times opposed worlds of objectivity and subjectivity. My intent is to address this place of in-between both in my investigative methodology (narrative evocative autoethnography) as well as in the subject of my study (balancing science and art in

educational leadership) hoping to evoke the challenges and benefits of living and acting on this awareness in educational leadership. Designed as an evocative form of qualitative work I have chosen to balance literary conventions with scientific ones since the meaning of this work is found in the reading itself, not in data tables or summaries (Richardson, 1994). Thus, in order to preserve the flow of the narrative, I have at times forgone certain conventions. For example in order to keep the work from being fragmented and risk losing the accumulation of narrative momentum I may chose (as I have in this introduction) to leave out the use of headings, though at other times in this dissertation I preserve the use of headings when it seems appropriate for a more analytically explanatory mode.

Professional literature abounds with scientific approaches to leadership and is recently developing a niche of artistic approaches to leadership but there is very little that attempts to balance science with art as I propose. In keeping with this learning goal my specific research question is the following: What are the challenges and benefits of undertaking the task of educational leader as both science and art while keeping steady reference to the aporia of objectively understood reality and subjective experiences of that same reality?

Chapter 2 – Conceptual Framework

Introduction

The research question closing Chapter 1 is the following: What are the challenges and benefits of undertaking the task of educational leader as both science and art while keeping steady reference to the aporia of objectively understood reality and subjective experiences of that same reality? Chapter 2 is intended to elaborate the concepts science and art and the dynamic tension that exists between the objective and subjective views that they represent. I name these views science and art for ease of use and for immediacy of understanding, but the two words are essentially place holders that represent greater complexity. To paraphrase Adorno (Delanty, 2000), after the concept, there follows a remainder. I wish to elaborate these two concepts, rather than specify them in the hopes that I do not exclude a remainder. I do not want the remainder that is left out to be the remainder that is essential to my reader and thus create the opportunity for multiple readings. I am aware however, that in presenting greater complexity, I run the risk of losing my reader so I will do my best to make the connections as clear as possible. One simple method I will use is that whenever these dual terms come up, whether it be science and art, or objectivity and subjectivity etc. I will use the method of parallelism in my writing which is to say the first term always represents the same perspective as the first term used elsewhere in this dissertation. The same naturally for the second term. In addition, I will attempt through various forms of commentary and review to maintain the linkages and thus develop a more complex view in keeping with the sophistication, depth and layers of the world as it naturally exists to the beholder.

One of my professors Alex Wiseman (personal communication, July 2009) once said, speaking from the science perspective, that schools are sets of systems somewhat like stacking

dolls that function within systems, that are themselves set within systems. Each level of the system impacts every other level. I have approached this topic from the largest relevant system down to the smallest. As a result, even though my topic is educational leadership, I understand educational leadership to function within the larger context of life so the first context within which I present the views of science and art is through theories that take the broad view of life itself. The second context is education. The third context is leadership. I place leadership third, because my topic is a form of leadership that takes place within education, though clearly leadership and organizational studies have their own distinct disciplines. In each of these contexts I wish to demonstrate the presence of the paradoxical situation described in chapter 1 of the copresence and validity of the two, oftentimes mutually exclusive, views.

Thus far I have been pretty specific about the two terms I wish to compare. I have called them both ‘perspectives,’ ‘interpretations,’ and ‘views.’ I have said that these views are exclusive in the sense that one interpretation frequently disallows the possibility of the other though both are valid views. I have described each of them as sometimes being hegemonic since adherence to one perspective sometimes makes it impossible to even conceive of an alternative interpretation. As I leave the analogy and move closer to its application I have described one of these views resulting from material observation while the other is more a result of subjective experiences. I have described these views as separate but interpenetrating – which perhaps explains why some believe they do not form a dualism at all (Belling, 2014). I have also claimed that many people point to Descartes as the source of this dualism (Delanty, 2000; Heller, 1999; Ropo & Sauer, 2008) though to my view the Cartesian moment is just one in a long history of interactions where one or other side of the pendulum have gained ascendancy.

The dual view dynamic in the context of life itself

The dual perspectives I have introduced may be recognized in a multitude of life contexts. Reaching back to the ancient Jewish religion, one finds the distinction between the material and the spiritual realms such that the good life for a Jewish believer tended toward present physical (that is external) benefits (Von Rad, 1972), whereas later for the Christian it more frequently pointed to otherworldly (associated with inner visionary) aspirations. Likewise while Aristotle had the view that matter was essential to life (Barnes, 2000), this was in opposition to Aristotle's teacher Plato who considered the eternal forms (internal and abstract) to be fundamental. More recently Kant acknowledged the existence of both in his antinomy of freedom claiming that while we live in a cause and effect universe, we also live according to a transcendent moral law making us free agents (Scruton, 2001). For Marx, there was the realm of necessity as against the realm of freedom (Habermas, 1987) and for Weber the dualism between rationality and meaning (Delanty, 2000). In addition, one might consider certain phases of intellectual thought and life in history such as the period of Roman pragmatics against the time of Greek thought (Maffesoli, 1996), Classicism and its opposition to Romanticism, or more currently Modernism and its alter-ego Post-Modernism. One could mention without ceasing various writers such as Husserl, Schutz, Durkheim, Parsons, and Mead (Habermas, 1984; Habermas, 1987) so that evidently this paradox is everywhere to be seen.

Outstanding among the various writers who have wrestled with this issue in the present day and those whose works have helpful parallels to each other are Jürgen Habermas (1984,1987), Agnes Heller (1999, 2000), Francisco Varela, and his colleagues Evan Thompson, and Eleanor Rosch (1991), Alaine Touraine (2007), Charles Taylor (1991), Gerard Delanty (2000), Roberto Mangabeira Unger (2004), Michel Maffesoli (1996) and Carl Jung (Stevens,

1994). In the following, I will present a selection from these theorists who have directly identified the dualism set in larger life size frames. The first two theorists (Habermas and Heller) approach the issue from a broad social perspective where Habermas who as a modernist is more representative of the objective material (science) point of view and Heller who is a postmodernist represents the subjective (art) view. The latter two theorists (Varela et al. and Jung) view the issue from a more individual perspective. Varela et al., approach the issue from a material (science) point of view and Jung who takes a mythological approach to psychology is representative of the subjective (art) view. I begin with Jürgen Habermas.

Jürgen Habermas: System and lifeworld.

The concepts, as articulated by Jürgen Habermas (1984, 1987), and parallel to those I have been describing, are system and lifeworld. According to his theory, lifeworld is primary, system is derivative and the lifeworld is best understood as a development of an earlier theory, that of communicative action which is where I will begin. According to Habermas social cohesion begins with rationality which is the ability to solve problems effectively. The more rational one's assertions and actions are, the more likely society will solve its problems and persist or reproduce. In order to coordinate these rational actions, one's assertions need to be defended against criticism. Criticism of the validity of an assertion can be made on one of three levels, either to:

- *cognitive-instrumental* claims of the truth of propositions or the efficacy of teleological actions
- *moral-practical* claims of the rightness of norms of actions
- *expressive* claims of truthfulness or sincerity of expression

Any speech act will involve all three claims, each of which addresses the corresponding *external, social* or *internal* worlds, but only one claim will be thematized at any one time. Communication that breaks down as the result of disagreement leads to discourse and the discourse that results

may be labeled (again corresponding to the three validity claims and worlds) as *theoretical*, *moral* and *aesthetic* (Finlayson, 2005; Habermas, 1984). Finally, in order to be effective, communication is required to follow three levels of rules. The first level addresses basic semantics and logic. The second set of rules governs procedure such as the sincerity required of every participant. The last set of rules are norms that prevent discourse from being coerced or repressed such that only “the unforced force of the better argument” (Finlayson, 2005, p. 43) wins out. In sum, Habermas’s theory of communicative action sets out the rules governing agreement arrived at in one of three worlds (external, social or internal) based on mutual understanding.

The concept of lifeworld expands upon the theory of communicative action just described. In order to come to agreement or disagreement about any given situation, in any of the three worlds mentioned above, a stock of previously established knowledge accumulated through cultural tradition is assumed. This stock of knowledge is informal and unregulated and goes by many names in Social Science including forms of life, cultures, language communities or world views (Habermas, 1984). For Habermas, this lifeworld is pre-interpreted and already always present and unquestioned (Habermas, 1984). Though life world assumptions can be called into question, especially if one is introduced to another communication community with differing lifeworld concepts, everyday communication does not normally assume that everything could be otherwise than it is and these ‘settled understandings’ resolve many disputes before they arise (Habermas, 1984). The lifeworld is typically referred to as a horizon, which means that under normal circumstances, it limits the vision of one’s knowledge. New and unpredictable situations are resolved through the coordination that results from communicative action with reference to

the pre-existing lifeworld resulting in the stabilization and reproduction of social life (Finlayson, 2005; Habermas, 1987).

The concept of system is a perspective one can take of social reality viewed from outside the life world such that elements contained within the lifeworld appear more like functional aspects relevant to the successful maintenance of a system (Habermas, 1987). In fact, from an outside perspective the lifeworld seems merely like one of a number of subsystems that have been differentiated out from a primitive whole and are driven by various media such as power, and money rather than the unforced force of the better argument. To those within the lifeworld, the system takes on the qualities of a second nature where an orientation to mutual understanding, respect of norms or identity formation become unnecessary (Habermas, 1987).

The systemic qualities deriving from the growth of rationality (problem solving) that takes place in more complex societies in which decision making processes gradually move away from a base in mutual understanding to delinguistified processes based in economic exchange or power transactions (Habermas, 1987) creates a paradoxical situation in which the lifeworld depends on instrumental actions of money and power to produce and circulate goods and services (Finlayson, 2003) yet this very same money and power are not related to understanding or consensus. And, whereas the lifeworld tends toward autonomy, the system tends to coercion creating a very fragile equilibrium. Over time the instrumentalization of social action tends to go unchecked and the rationalized system colonizes the lifeworld penetrating ever deeper into decision making processes resulting in a decrease in the amounts of communicative action based on mutual understanding and an increase in decisions made simply through the power of systemic media, thus diminishing the very lifeworld that is the source of the system (Habermas,

1987). This then is Habermas's version of the paradox I have set out to address as well as a diagnosis of the tension that exists between the two terms.

Following Weber's analogy of the iron cage of rationality, Habermas's fear was that a society organized increasingly around systemic imperatives would result naturally in a decrease of subjective meaning and would predict the rise of numerous related social pathologies.

According to Finlayson the pathologies are as follows:

- i. Decrease in shared meanings and mutual understanding (anomie)
- ii. Erosion of social bonds (disintegration)
- iii. Increase in people's feelings of helplessness and lack of belonging (alienation)
- iv. Consequent unwillingness to take responsibility for their actions and for social phenomena (demoralization)
- v. Destabilization and breakdown in social order (social instability)... (Finlayson, 2005, p. 57).

Naturally, if this hypothesis were true, one would do what one could in order to remedy the circumstances. Yet, Habermas is unclear on exactly how to proceed with such a task though he seems inclined to regard it as a social rather than political project since the state as part of the system is a source of the problem rather than the answer to it (Finlayson, 2005).

Habermas's work is regarded highly enough that most social scientists feel compelled to comment one way or another. Perhaps the greatest challenge against his theory has been directed at his idea of communication. For one thing, it was based on the concept of the public sphere in which a society of equals might participate in rational discussion and come to agreement. This was more ideological than descriptive as such a society of equals has never existed (Finlayson, 2005). However, another aspect of this problem is the very question of ever coming to closure through discourse which has been denied by deconstructionists and since the time of his writings history has proven if anything greater fragmentation of discourse rather than unity. This fragmentation is expressed in personal and social contingency (Heller, 1999) cultural

crystallization, the democratization of knowledge and the proliferation of histories which gather speed through accelerated global communications (Delanty, 2000).

One well known theorist who admires Habermas's work, Anthony Giddens (1990), never the less believes that Habermas's system-lifeworld polarity is unhelpful. In contrast to Weber's characterization of bureaucracy (on which Habermas built a significant portion of his argument) as "tending inevitably towards rigidity" (Giddens, 1990, p. 138) or Habermas's concern about colonization of the lifeworld, Giddens argues that in fact organizations produce new areas of autonomy and spontaneity. In addition, as technical expertise expands, this expertise becomes part of daily discourse and activity which is to say that it takes the shape of a newly adapted lifeworld of unspoken assumptions. Rather than colonizing the lifeworld, it is transforming it. This is an interesting take on Habermas and seems to hold some possibility. There are, I believe, still threats to the lifeworld depending on whether the transformations take the shape of an evolution or a revolution. Since Giddens characterizes the modern world as a "juggernaut" (Giddens, 1990, p. 139) offering hope in the midst of risk "fraught with high consequence" (Giddens, 1990, p. 139) I do not believe he has really diminished but rather refined Habermas's concerns. The lifeworld still seems fragile in the face of systemic expansion.

Agnes Heller: Two imaginaries.

I now turn to another theorist of this dual view dynamic, one who respects and agrees with much of Habermas by the name of Agnes Heller (1999). She improves upon Habermas in the sense that her theory accounts for the greater variability we see in the world today and presents her argument as being post-modern in nature. She describes modernity as being founded on the non-founding foundation of freedom. What this means in essence is that every claim is criticisable by a counter claim. Heller believes that the modern world survives, "not because it

has a foundation but because it can be kept in balance” (Heller, 1999, p. 20). Instead of the Habermasian lifeworld and system, Heller sees human life as being enframed by two imaginaries; technological and historical. The dominant imaginary of the present time is technology, especially as it is instituted in science, and its elevation of the correspondence theory of truth. Our vision of the world is shaped by science and this coupled with enlightenment ideals has resulted in a dynamic of continuous replacement of inferior with superior determined through measurement and calculation (Heller, 1999). Nevertheless, another imaginary that has accompanied technology since the birth of modernity is the historical imagination. Each of these imaginaries function to frame human existence and neither of them completely fit the other. Where the frame of technology is oriented to problem solving, the frame of historical imagination is oriented to interpretation and both have a tendency to play against the other in a perpetual dynamic according to the unfounded nature of modernity (Heller, 1999). Whereas science and problem solving frequently expose the falsehood (objectively speaking) of historical meanings, never the less, the use of technology, particularly in political realms requires legitimacy which derives from the historical imagination. Heller calls this the double bind of modernity expressed in the following dualisms “problem solving and interpretation, planning and recollection, calculation and reflection” (Heller, 1999, p. 107).

Heller’s interpretation of the Habermasian threat is not directed at technology per se, but to the antinomy that is maintained by the dynamic of modernity founded on the non-founding foundation of freedom. For Heller, a discontinuation of this dynamic such that either the technological or the historical were to become the sole imaginary or if the technological and the historical were to fuse and become one, the result would be a state of chaos. For Heller, “body and mind are threatened by losing the capacity and the opportunity to side with one imaginary

institution against the other, or to cope with their contradictions and coexistence, and thus to accept choice and contingency” (Heller, 1999, p. 162). In order to preserve the dynamics of the double bind for all people, and avoid either extremes of totalitarianism or anarchy Heller, like Habermas, hesitates to place dependency on the state or other agencies. She places her confidence rather on ethical individuals. For Heller, “if more people chose to be good or ‘decent’ then quite simply the world would be a better place: a true home for humanity” (Tormey, 1998, p. 147). Thus we might describe the ‘solution’ to the ‘problem’ of the contingent individual caught in the double bind between technical and historical imaginary as represented in the ethical individual who makes of his contingency a life that allows or encourages others to make the same positive choices (Gardiner, 1997; Heller, 1999; Tormey, 1998).

Varela, Thomson and Rosch: Cognition as behavior and experience.

The newly burgeoning field of cognitive science which “stands at the crossroads where the natural sciences and the human sciences meet” (Varela, Thompson & Rosch, 1991, p. 13) provides a third intriguing empirical representation of these paradoxical concepts. The cognitive sciences began in the field of robotics and developed as an outflow of the desire to create artificial intelligence. Cognitive science investigates cognition as *behavior – computational mind*, and cognition as *experience – phenomenological mind* (Varela et al., 1991). The peculiar discovery made in cognitive science is that what we experience as thought does not correspond to how our brains function computationally. That is to say, according to a cognitivist approach the mind functions as a type of input/output device with no need for consciousness. Yet, this computation which has no need of a self, or consciousness, is never the less directed toward a world where consciousness is paramount. We live ‘as if’ the world were three dimensional and colored rather than made of sub-atomic particles. This leads to what Jackendoff calls the “mind-

mind problem” (Varela et al., 1991, p. 52) which is the problem of understanding the relationship between “computational states and experience” (Varela et al., 1991, p. 52). This leads to the further complication that what we discover about the function of the human brain takes place in our *experience* of discovery and thus we come upon a circularity that until now can only be resolved either by denying human experience altogether, or by denying the ability of science to properly interpret the real essence of human interaction with the environment. Alternatively, humanity will have to discover a method of incorporating both windows on reality in some larger more comprehensive frame. The scientific base established by the field of cognition allows us to see what has already been well understood by both Habermas (1984, 1987) and Heller (1999, 2000) in that one dimension of cognitive function corresponds to the world of objective matter (Habermas’s system; Heller’s technological imaginary) while the other dimension corresponds to the realm of subjective experience (Habermas’s lifeworld; Heller’s historical imaginary).

For Varela et al.(1991), the problem is not found in the coexistence of the two dimensions of mind, but in how to properly understand them when our experience of thought does not correspond to the function of our minds. There is a deep tension, they explain, between science and experience in which “science is so dominant that we give it the authority to explain even when it denies what is most immediate and direct – our everyday, ... experience” (Varela et al., 1991, p. 12 - 13). Varela et al. go on to claim that without a move to find a unity between these two principles, the rift between science and experience will deepen. Varela et al. propose the term enaction as a category for cognition that may no longer be understood as simply mirroring of nature, but as interacting with nature in a lived and transformative experience. This concept of enaction (or emergence) is intended to analyze mind as the result of the twin influences of nature (brain and environment) and our interactions with nature (experience) and

that these two principles are mutually specifying which is to say that as a single interactive process, each has an influence on the other. Such a theoretical perspective would allow us to bridge the gap between external and internal dimensions and thus avoid the illusory extremes of realism and idealism.

Carl Jung: The integration of two selves

The final general theorist I wish to acknowledge is Carl Jung. As with the previous theorists, Jung seeks to address the two worlds, in this case articulated alternatively as a balance of the biological facts of existence (the objective perspective) and spiritual facts of existence (the subjective perspective) as they unite in the field of psychiatry; the science of behavior and the science of mind as united in the concept of archetypes; and the conscious contemporary self and the timeless unconscious self united in the individuated self (Stevens, 1994).

Carl Jung's understanding of psychology differed from most of his contemporaries in that he did not view the mind of the child as a tabula rasa but rather that certain structures of the mind were already in place. Jung's understanding of the human psyche is explained following figure 2 below:

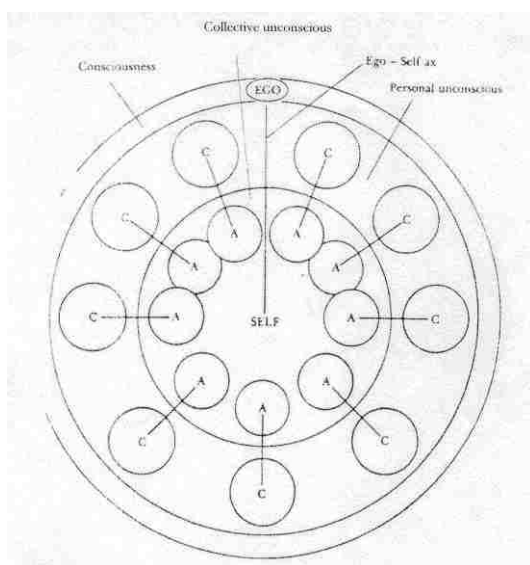


Figure 2
(Stevens, 1994, p. 49)

C=Complex
A=Archetype

Consciousness or ego represents the self that we are aware of and the one we consciously present to others. The personal unconscious is that realm of emotionally charged associations that we have of various things. We might refer to the mother complex, the father complex, moral complex etc. These complexes form an internal expectation of what the external environment is meant to provide and every culture succeeds or fails to the degree that they are able to fulfill the inborn expectation of needs supplied in a roughly predetermined sequence. And, while complete fulfillment is expressed as an unobtainable ideal, the degree to which there are inadequate supplies for the inner expectation is the degree to which one's future development is hindered or distorted. These unconscious expectations are experienced as a kind of mystery and are not known directly except by way of a process called the transcendent function which allows one to read the meaning of symbols or symbolic events such that one's conscious self (external and objective) is able to integrate with the unconscious (internal and subjective) and thus find fulfillment. Much of this work is accomplished in one's dreams.

At the deepest level of the self is the collective unconscious in which the archetypes or "identical psychic structures common to all" (Stevens, 1994, p. 47) are found. The collective unconscious is where the entire personality is integrated and behaviors are initiated, mediated and controlled. Archetypes within the collective unconscious give rise to similar "thoughts, images, mythologems, feelings, and ideas in people irrespective of their class, creed, race, geographical location or historical epoch" (Stevens, 1994, p. 48). Jung considered archetypes as foundational to the conscious mind. Not only so, but he considered them to be both neurological and psychic structures thus linking the world of matter with spirit. Archetypes thus order our perceptions of the objective world which we study. This echoes the sort of circularity Varela et al (1991) identified between the study of mind and its direct complicity with states of mind forcing

us to take account of both the hypothesized external world and our personal experience of it in our encounters with reality. Ultimately the human organism with all its psychic endowments, aims for homeostasis. It seeks a kind of equilibration both internally and externally called individuation. Individuation is the process of bringing two sets of relationships into balance, the first is one's relationship to the world of externals where one gains the necessary material requirements for a secure and stable life. This would equate to what Heller (1999) calls having a world. And second, is one's relationship with the unconscious through a progressive act of bringing into conscious awareness the "developmental process unfolding within oneself" (Stevens, 1994, p. 81) the free and creative act of Self-completion. This equates to what Heller calls having a life. When there are difficulties achieving this equilibration, the primary means for gaining assistance is found in the dream life and through therapy. We will begin with dreams.

Jung's understanding of the integrating effect of dreams began with Freud who taught that dreams were the expression of forbidden wishes which are repressed during one's conscious waking life and released during sleep. However, since the wishes are forbidden they are also disturbing and in order to prevent the disturbance from waking the sleeper, the unconscious wishes are presented in acceptable images. Interpretation of dreams brings to conscious awareness material that resides in the unconscious providing one with the opportunity to seek resolution according to the homeostatic principle. Jung differed from Freud in that Freud viewed the dream images as signs pointing ultimately to some form of sexual repression, whereas Jung viewed the images as symbols representing very much the actual situation of the unconscious rather than some other thing represented in a sign form (Stevens, 1994). For Jung, dreams were not the expression of repressed wishes but the expression of human nature in its purest form. The dream according to Jung is "a spontaneous self-portrayal in symbolic form of the actual state of

the unconscious” (Stevens, 1994, p. 105) and thus represents the best material for understanding persons as they are. Jung viewed Freud’s form of analysis as reductive and oriented to origins with a focus on illness, while Jung’s view was expansive pointing to constructive developments taking place in the person who is not so much a patient, but a candidate for individuation. For Jung dream symbols properly read take on a transcendent function allowing one to transition between one’s conscious attitudes and unconscious states thus bringing about the complete personality. Creative use of symbols along with dream interpretation thus becomes central to Jung’s concept of personal development and methodology.

Therapy is the other form in which personal development may take place. For Jung, psychological disorder is merely a sign of the personality attempting to restore balance between the conscious and unconscious processes through the transcendent function. He achieved a great deal of attention for his successes with this orientation. Jung’s approach to the patient was to treat the patient not as a person with a disorder so much as a person who is seeking individuation and the apparent disorder is merely a sign of the patient’s attempts at resolution and contrary to most treatments of his day, entering into – rather than avoiding – pain was the required process as it brought to greater light the healing powers of the unconscious. Jung’s treatment followed four basic stages: 1. Confession, or the explication by the patient of the initial conditions of distress and all their accompanying details; 2. Elucidation, or the analysis of the situation and the beginning of the work of engaging the unconscious; 3. Education, or the use of insights gained from the first two stages as applied to daily life and finally; 4. Transformation, in which selfhood is attained through the transcendent function and the activation of one’s personal quest for individuation.

To be qualified to lead others in such a quest is to have first blazed the trail one's self. In other words, to be a therapist and to provide analysis requires that one must first have analyzed and come to know one's own self on the most intimate and brutally honest ventures. Jung says "If you are not right how can the patient be made right? If you are not convinced how can you convince him? You must yourself be the real stuff. If you are not, God help you!" (as cited in Stevens, 1994, p. 136) and again he remarks that "An ancient adept has said: 'If the wrong man uses the right means, the right means work in the wrong way'" (as cited in Stevens, 1994, p. 136). These statements identify precisely what I have often felt about the field of education and educational leadership which is so frequently immersed in a mentality of methods. Parker Palmer echoes this sentiment when he states that we educators (and their leaders I would add) teach "who we are" (Palmer, 1998, xi). This point will become pertinent as we venture more deeply into education and educational leadership theories further into this discussion.

Ultimately Jung's method may be seen as a kind of antidote (either for the individual, or by analogy for a social system) to the pathologies that Habermas describes resulting from the parasitic growth of the system. Taken from the vantage point of our current summary we might say that it is not so much parasitism of the system in the lifeworld as it is a loss of balance that produces the anomie, disintegration, alienation, demoralization and social instability that Habermas refers to (Finlayson, 2005). Carl Jung once noted that about a third of his cases were "not suffering from any clearly definable neurosis, but from senselessness and aimlessness in their lives" (as cited in Stevens, 1994, p. 129) and added that he "should not object if this were called the general neurosis of our age" (as cited in Stevens, 1994, p. 129). I would contend that were he alive today he would find that the condition has worsened and is perhaps even aggravated by the increasing levels of corporate global expansion and competition. The key to

analysis and to life for Jung, was to remain open to the urges of the unconscious which, without denying the technical explanations of the objective world, is *experienced* as the urgings of soul. The experience of soul seems to be like a kind of inner creative companion accompanying us on our life's journey and it is our task to listen to our dreams and active imagination, letting things happen within and without, and then submit to the transformative power of the drama that unfolds.

Since the start of this chapter the concepts of science and art have taken on some layers. The former is rooted in objectively based views of reality and the latter in subjectively based understanding. These two worlds mutually enrich or threaten each other. When considering the threats that these worlds may pose to the other, each theorist so far investigated looks not to institutions for insurance, but the individual person. There is an ethic of wholeness that is implied in the matter of keeping both material and subjective worlds meaningful, relevant and alive. One needs to give constructive attention to both despite their frequent contradictions. Beyond being an ethic, it seems a matter for survival.

The dual view dynamic in the context of education

The world of educational research has largely left the dynamic interplay of the objective material world and the subjective world of experience untouched by approaching their specialties from an unquestioning acceptance of one or the other perspectives with one view (usually the scientific) tending to absorb the other (artistic) view. I will survey two exceptions to this general rule by first looking at the field of comparative education and then the theories of an outstanding educational philosopher by the name of Inna Semetsky (2005; 2010; 2012).

Comparative and international education.

The field of comparative and international education (CIE) is the broadest approach to an academic understanding of education available. It is interdisciplinary, intercultural and international (Noah, 1984; Phillips and Schweisfurth, 2008). Its analytical focus ranges from world regions all the way down to the level of the individual student. It includes various demographics as broad as entire populations narrowing down from gender to religious, ethnic and age groups. In addition, it explores multiple intersections of education and society including teaching methods, management, finance, etc. (Bray & Thomas, 1995). For my own part, I define the field as the ongoing interdisciplinary conversation that seeks to understand and explain the phenomena of education and its complex interactions in local and international settings. What is helpful about this growing field is that they have run into precisely the problem I have identified and consciously work toward some understanding about how to resolve the dilemma of objectivity and subjectivity in their own theories. Max Eckstein for example notes the two dominant models at the time of his writing as the “progress oriented model” and the “radical paradigm” (Eckstein, 1983, p. 313-314). In this case, progress is understood to be a concept of greater and greater improvement toward a particular idea of the good, whereas radical is meant to describe any such idea of improvement as being the arbitrary and limiting determination of those who are in power. Over time, these positions have developed into a conflicted view of schooling represented by the neo-institutional school on the one hand and the critical theorists on the other. I will describe this conflict in more detail as follows.

At its heart, neo-institutionalism declares that schooling is an institution that has certain definable characteristics; a school, is a school, is a school. Since this is so, we would expect that schooling around the world (the nature of globalization is a key issue) would exhibit certain

characteristics that would be true no matter where you happen to chance upon a school. This merits little disagreement and is an example of deep structure theories that Unger (2004) identifies. On the other hand the critical theorists remind us that humans seek freedom from elements in this life that are considered oppressive resulting in some form of “adaptation, modification and resistance” (Steiner-Khamsi, 2004, p. 5) to forms of schooling that are externally imposed rather than derived from within. And, once again, there seems to be little to argue here as well. Thus we have on the neo-institutionalists’ side the emphasis on the definitive nature of schools (the realm of objective materiality), and on the critical theorists side the value of agency and the unpredictability of local forces (the realm of subjective experience). It is when one follows the direction of these arguments further that problems arise. On the extreme end, you have neo-institutionalists pronouncing in a rather once for all sort of way that “institutional schooling will continue to become even more central and standard in beliefs and practices throughout the world” (Baker and LeTendre, 2005a, p. 178). Countering this you have the critical theorists saying that they neither believe in a globalizing model of education nor do they share any enthusiasm for it (Steiner-Khamsi, 2004). I will touch on these two frameworks again when I approach the subject of leadership within education below.

The view that I have been developing would advocate that we must accept the evidence offered by both sides and find some way to live within the tension between the two. My basic argument is this. Yes, there must be something called globalization. Both sides of the debate acknowledge this – whether you call it a “world educational culture” (Baker & LeTendre, 2005, p. 169) or decontextualized and “deterritorialized” or “transnational” (Steiner-Khamsi, 2004, p. 215) models of schooling each way of describing it, is pointing to an “it” that is occurring. There is something there to observe, there is something that we must admit has the nature of objectivity

about it. The counter balance to this however is that institutions (global or otherwise) change. Take for example, the institution of marriage. We might say that marriage has gone global long before education has. It might have once been assumed that the monogamous married couple is the norm. But clearly that is not the case. There are various permutations that have once, or continue to be possible. There is life long monogamy, there is serial monogamy (a series of monogamous relationships, followed by divorce and remarriage), there is “friends with benefits” (committed emotional and physical relationships without formal expressions of those commitments), there is single sex marriage (homosexual unions), there are marriages with multiple wives or multiple husbands, there are secret marriages (private, rather than public commitment), there are marriages with unknown long term lovers beside, the list could go on. Yes, there is a thing called marriage and we would most likely be able to identify it if we saw it, but there is also an incredible amount of diversity within this model. Similarly, I believe education has the potential for an incredible amount of diversity.

One key issue that gives strength to neo-institutionalist interpretations is the presence of a standardizing effect currently dominant in the education world (Baker and LeTendre, 2005; Meyer and Ramirez, 2003). The enthusiasm for standardized knowledge is, in my view, at the root of much else that is then *observed* as the spread of a global model. Without a presumption and enactment upon standards it would not likely be possible to observe much of what is now taken as evidence of a world model of schooling. Shadow education might not be so much on the rise (Baker & LeTendre, 2005b) were it not for the need for all students to fit a standard model. School violence (Baker, LeTendre & Akiba, 2005) might not be an issue if children were free to pursue what interests them, rather than seeking a “standard.” Teaching in schools, once standardization is broken, would become less and less similar. Homework might become a

different issue when students pursue studies more congenial to them. My view is that this enthusiasm for standards will not last. There are plenty of thinkers (Apple, 2006; Darling-Hammond, 2007; Giroux, 2004; Noddings, 2005; Pinar, 2004; Ravitch, 2010), to mention only a few, who bemoan the economic meta-narrative that drives schooling to follow the dictates of governments aligned with business, and others who see the damage of standardizing schooling. When the standardizing effect begins to wane schools will return once again to more elemental forms. When we see these more elemental forms, we might then have a better idea of the unvarying nature of the institution of schooling. When one takes sides theoretically, one loses the ability to maintain balance. The critical theorist while seeking liberty needs to recognize that there are elemental forms in life and recognize that the freedom one is searching for might even be found within these immovable forms. But the neo-institutionalist while seeking the certainties of necessity also needs to be wary of the dangers of believing one has finally grasped the key that opens all doors as that same key may lock the door trapping one in false necessity (Unger, 2004). To accurately represent the world, each view must be able to speak to the other in some productive manner while at the same time avoiding the circumstance of complete fusion.

Inna Semetsky: The dual view dynamic in education.

Apart from CIE, there are several other scholars in education who acknowledge and describe the divide between materially objective views and subjective experience in education. Chief among them are the curriculum theorists William Pinar (2004), William Doll (1993), and James Taylor (1998) as well as the educational theorists Andy Hargreaves (1994) and Inna Semetsky (2005; 2010; 2012). Semetsky differs from all the others in that she views these realms as progressions, rather than simply differentiated viewpoints. For this reason, and the depth and sophistication of her arguments, it is worthwhile to look into her work in more detail.

Inna Semetski completed her PhD under the advisement of Nel Noddings (Semetsky, 2012). She is gaining a reputation through her prolific writing as well as the controversial introduction of her theory of tarot in education. Semetski approaches her work in a multidisciplinary fashion and relies heavily on writers as diverse as Nel Noddings, John Dewey, William Doll, Ervin Laszlo, Charles Sanders Pierce, Plato, Gilles Deleuze and Carl Jung representing the fields of education, philosophy, complexity theory, semiotics, depth psychology as well as their intersections.

Linking the visible worlds with the invisible is central to Semetsky's (2005) theories. With frequent reference to Charles Sanders Pierce she identifies a triad of knowledge spheres referred to as Firstness, Secondness and Thirdness. Each of these knowledge spheres build upon and encompass the former such that Firstness is found within Secondness, and Thirdness in turn includes all of the former. The description she makes are close approximations to my own terminology. Semetsky states:

Firstness is quality, possibility, freedom. Secondness, as a relation of the First to the Second, is of opposites, physical reality, billiard ball forces, rigid deterministic laws, direct effect, action, and reaction. Thirdness relates seconds to thirds; it is synthesis, communication, memory, mediation. (Semetsky, 2005, p. 200)

Carefully following Pierce, Semetsky (2005) describes the way in which the knowledge spheres are said to work. Firstness is a sort of hypothesis or premise that is assumed without really knowing how this understanding is attained. It is a kind of ongoing intuitive awareness that is not recognized as thought at all. Firstness is understood as the ongoing and abiding sense of inference about reality called abduction and because it is ongoing there is no sense of beginning or end and thus no sense of actual thought. The abiding sense of this intuitive awareness and lack

of any apparent source may indicate the whole physical and emotional make up of the person and resonates well with Habermas's (1984) lifeworld which is always present and unquestioned and Carl Jung's personal unconscious (Stevens, 1994). Firstness is then followed by the Secondness of actual encounter. If Firstness is the hypothesis, Secondness is the acceptance or denial of that hypothesis. Secondness is being relative to, or in reaction with the actual world itself. It is the brute fact of human existence set against, in tension with or in correspondence to the hypothesized and prior Firstness. The process of hypothesis in this sense toward the abducted inference is said to be made by analogy of sorts and is otherwise unanalyzable, inexplicable and unintellectual. It is a sort of image (or semiotic) projection based on the signs acquired up to that point. Thirdness comes in afterward and explicates. For Pierce, all such understandings of Firstness are conjectural and the moment one gets too formal in description, one moves away from the reality which remains ever beyond one's grasp. In defiance of this Semetsky never the less sets out to describe it as she sees it in figure 3 below.

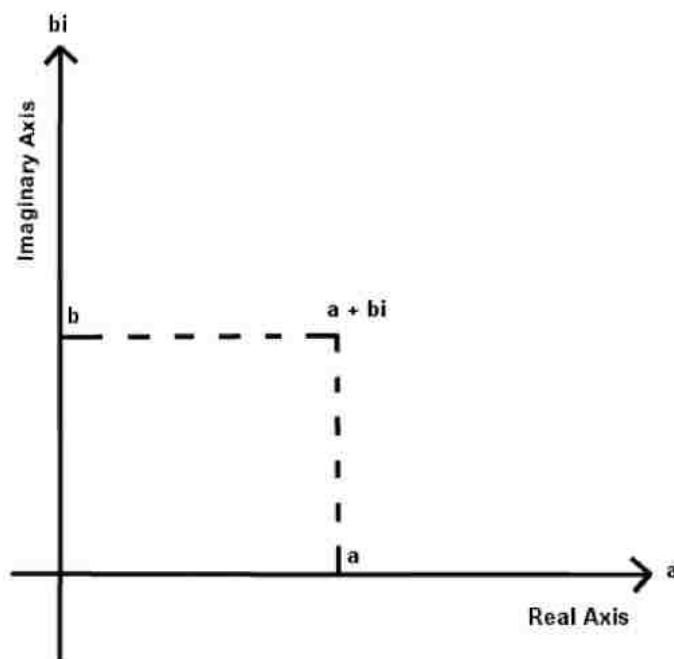


Figure 3 – (Semetsky, 2005, p. 205)

It may be of interest to know that the geometrical explanation of the three knowledge spheres in Figure 3 (above) first came to Semetsky (2005) in a dream. The figure is a coordinate plane where the y-axis represents Firstness and uses imaginary numbers, the x-axis represents the propositional logical reasoning of Thirdness and uses real numbers. It is the combination of the Firstness of abductive inference and the Thirdness of deductive reasoning that results in new knowledge and produces a vector between the two axes as in Figure 4 (below).

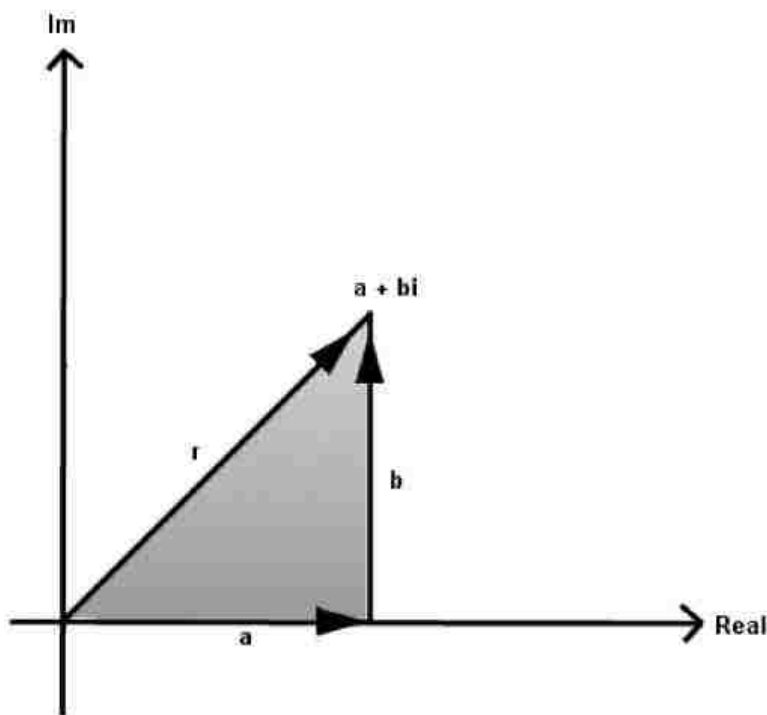


Figure 4 – (Semetsky, 2005, p. 206)

According to Semetsky (2005), this triad of feeling (axis y), action (the middle vector) and reason (axis x) result in the experience of new knowledge. In contrast, continuation along the x-axis merely produces more, but not new knowledge. Progression along the y-axis merely produces an amplification of feeling or awareness. It is only as one combines the two do new objects of knowledge come into being. This sense of progression from Firstness to Thirdness despite its mathematical tone has a more organic sense of growth and development causing me to wonder if my polarity of subjectivity and objectivity is simply an artificial distinction made by

too much influence from Cartesian dualism in my thought patterns. It seems very worthwhile to hold this alternative explanation in view as the study continues to progress though at present I still wonder how freedom, an aspect of Firstness, is included within the concept of Secondness with its rigid deterministic laws. In addition, it should be noted that Semetsky's explanation is accompanied with an illustration on a *Cartesian* grid.

Semetsky's theory is made more vivid in another article co-written with Delpech-Ramey (2012) where she draws from Gilles Deleuze who speaks of a student learning to swim. There is no way to represent swimming theoretically such that one may learn from it. Rather, swimming must be learned through a thousand subliminal projections, trials and errors with reality (the water) and only as the swimming skill is acquired might one represent this skill as a mathematical logical sequence of movements. This image of learning corresponds very much to Varela et al.'s (1991) theory of cognition as enaction. To support this theory Varela et al. cite a study involving the use of kittens born at the same time. This experiment involved separating the kittens into two groups, those who were able to see as well as interact with reality, and those who were kept in little carts drawn by the other kittens where they could observe reality from their perch in the carts. Thus the control group interacted with reality while the experimental group only observed it. The action vector was ruled out for the experimental group. Because they were only able to observe the world passively, they had the representation of three dimensional reality but not the experience. The interesting result was that the experimental group, once freed from their restraints, were unable to accurately determine three dimensions often running into walls or falling off raised edges. These cats, who were only able to form impressions based on observation had faulty knowledge and as a result were unable to move effectively in a three

dimensional environment. Adequate learning required that they have both the representation of reality based on direct observation as well as conceptions derived from experience.

This is all well and good. Even if it is granted that yes, we need to combine experience with science in order to solve real world problems adequately, we have not yet arrived at any sort of profoundly new emphasis. After all, if we stopped here only, we might simply find ourselves affirming any of a variety of holistic or real world problem solving practices already advocated in education in a variety of contexts. I still believe that the y-axis of Firstness is not likely going to be given its due unless one pushes the boundary further. Perhaps that is why in addition to the theories already cited, Semetsky introduces her theory of Tarot. Semetsky's (2010) theory of Tarot is a much larger project. It is, firstly, controversial and therefore necessitates perhaps greater attentiveness to detail as she carries her arguments forward in the academic world of peer reviewed journals. It also seems to require an "astonishing array of theoretical discourses" (Whitson, 2010, p. 219) to pull it off, and James Whitson states these discourses are "woven together seamlessly" (2010, p. 219).

Tarot readings are meant to address the need inherent in all educational ambition which is the promise of self knowledge. Semetsky quotes Noddings who says that "when we claim to *educate*, we must take Socrates seriously. Unexamined lives may well be valuable and worth living, but an education that does not invite such examination may not be worthy of the label *education*" (as cited in Semetsky, 2010, p. 203). Semetsky wishes to show how Tarot might be used as an educational tool to help students to know themselves better. Her aims are to demystify what for many is considered an esoteric practice.

In brief, the Tarot system is a set of cards with pictorial images that may be said to "represent the archetypes of the collective unconscious posited by Carl Jung as the memory pool

‘recording’ the collective experiences of humankind across times, places, and cultures” (Semetsky, 2010, p. 204). These archetypes are equated with the strange attractors of the psyche that “represent the emergence of order from chaos and, if correctly interpreted, give insight into the status of the [as yet unconscious] process” (Semetsky, 2010, p. 204). In a reading, the cards are laid out in a pattern with each location of the cards assigned a particular meaning. The reader explains the meaning of the cards and their layout and then interacts with the subject over the particular application the entire arrangement might indicate. Despite the random distribution of the cards, there is usually a “customary astonishment” (Semetsky, 2010, p. 205) that Semetsky associates with Jung’s principal of synchronicity where meaningful patterns are generated in nature and experience bypassing the concept of cause and effect and embracing rather the ‘field’ concept of physics which points to the connectedness of nature. Pictures make visible what are usually not apparent (archetypes) and with the surplus of meaning available in the images, the subject is generally able to make relevant and meaningful connections with the conditions of their lives and move toward transformation. These archetypes, and their meanings, Semetsky reminds us, do not exist solely in the mind but, quoting systems theorist Ervin Laszlo, are “in nature” (Semetsky, 2010, p. 207). For my own purpose, I am not especially interested in the Tarot per se, but the significance of images, or we can say symbols, as they aid in the process of personal transformation are particularly interesting. Not only so, but the realm of archetypes and symbols relates to subjective experience and should assist me as I seek to balance the worlds of objectivity and subjectivity in my daily work as an educational leader.

The dual view dynamic in the context of (educational) leadership

When one at last moves to theories of leadership both general and specific to education the set of studies addressing both dimensions of objectively observable external reality and

subjective internal experience seems no more robust than those falling under the general rubric of education. There is never the less, some representation which we will explore here. Like the earlier sections, I begin with writers who acknowledge the dual view dynamic. Unlike the earlier sections, I follow with further descriptions of the purely scientific approach to educational leadership and management, followed by a purely artistic approach. In each case contributions are gathered first from comparative and international education which is then followed with contributions from organizational, management and leadership studies. I conclude with one promising consideration by which a balance may be meaningfully struck within the work of educational leadership.

Fenwick English: Re-centering the human.

Fenwick English describes the field of educational administration as “steeped in modernity and scientism” (2003, p. 24). He claims that since the start of the 1900s leadership and management have followed pseudo scientific methods that reduce down to attempts at efficiency and the reduction of waste. English calls these methods pseudo scientific because they claim to be neutral attempts at getting to the truth of educational administration by the verifiability principle yet there is no way to verify that such a method gets to the truth. Additionally, English points out that those in educational administration have set their faith in quantifiable methods where social phenomena are translated into variables that can be analyzed and understood. The problem with this approach however is that isolation of variables necessarily rules out the totality from which they derive and thus, of necessity the “numbers never transcend the logic which produced them” (English, 2003, p. 23). In order for science to work as science extraneous factors need to be ruled out in order to identify specific and isolated cause / effect relations. But, in education, the more one rules out extraneous factors, the less the study will be anything like real

education which is full of moment by moment floods of variability. One of the obvious forms of variability is the interiority of the humans who live and work in the schools yet any emphasis on the humanity of participants has traditionally been impugned.

Leadership has typically been equated with managerial principals and human individuality is subsumed. According to English, this decentering of humanity needs to be pushed back and the lines between knower and known, objectivity and subjectivity and fact and fiction need to be abolished (English, 2003) in favor of a more dynamic (but little elaborated) concept of mutual transformation. Citing Warren Bennis, English states that “Leaders conquer the context... while managers surrender to it” and as such “Leadership cannot be understood or taught when it is fixed in the crosshairs of organizational productivity and efficiency where it is today firmly grounded” (English, 2003, p. 57). Accordingly, moral purpose needs to rise up against technique and the heroism of individuals needs to stand against ‘behavior and skills’ as the vision for leadership of a school. The poetic needs to regain its status alongside the scientific and this will move educational management more in the direction of educational leadership (English, 2003).

Eugenie Samier: Emergence of the human.

Consistent with English’s (2003) analysis, Eugenie Samier (2005) describes public administration (of which education would be an example though it is not specifically identified) as a technocratic, primarily managerial enterprise “frequently concerned with organisational structure and design, administrative functions, management techniques, and economic modelling” (Samier, 2005, p. 7). The results of such emphasis are threefold: “1. values of hierarchy, control, and power are implicit, if not explicit and a hidden agenda of conformity permeates the literature and training programmes, reducing effective critique; 2. historical and

cross-cultural comparison is scant since value analysis and historical and anthropological theories and research methods are required for this kind of research; and, 3. problematic aspects of living in organisations, such as value conflict, experiential contradiction, and personal construction of meaning have been excised” (Samier, 2005, p. 7-8). The overall consequence is that an understanding of the human condition is “submerged in organizational levels of analysis” (Samier, 2005, p. 8). Even those whom she cites as examples of theorists who challenge such managerial orientations such as Elton Mayo, Chester Barnard, Chris Argyris, Philip Selznick Douglas McGregor and Charles Lindblom “are still tied to the notion of managerial control” (Samier, 2005, p. 8).

Samier (2005) suggests several potential responses that the humanities might make to the questions raised by a study of public administration. History might address the temporality of public administration and retain focus on the changeability of time and circumstance and thus challenge the notion that things must be as they are just because they are so at this present moment. Philosophy might provide administrators with principles for decision making that balance the ethics of responsibility to the ethics of conviction or “in other words, and contrary to most administrative and managerial writings, one cannot simply adopt an organisational perspective – one must be both of and outside the socialising effects of career” (Samier, 2005, p. 26). Anthropology might help the administrator “capture the elusive aspects of climate, culture and politics” (Samier, 2005, p. 27). The fine arts through their concept of beauty would provide a mediation between the “sensible and the rational” (Samier, 2005, p. 28). Architecture and artifactual analysis would provide a means of critiquing one’s environment for its impact on the human situation. Performative and theatrical analysis would provide a framework for

understanding the “roles, scripts, and styles of interaction, and the structuring necessary in staging organisational life” (Samier, 2005, p. 32).

Two spiritual orientations to organizational understanding.

Both English and Samier present the basic framework I am attempting to address. Beyond these theorists, two further writers give serious attention to both terms which I am comparing. They both have a more spiritual orientation (Eggert, 1998; Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski & Flowers, 2005) which I will touch on briefly.

The first approach comes from a book, significantly dedicated to the memory of Francisco J. Varela, called *Presence: An exploration of profound change in people, organizations and society* (2005) co-authored by Peter Senge, C. Otto Scharmer, Joseph Jaworski and Betty Sue Flowers. In it the authors claim that the blind spot of science, and our understanding of management and leadership upon which it is based, is the inner experience of the individual and collective groups. The authors speak of the system being a kind of living organism that continuously evolves and cannot be well understood by industrial, machine age concepts. A great deal of their argument is directed toward acquiring the ability to be aware of realities as they progress and then act in harmony with the future which emerges along trajectories within the system. The central concept of the entire book is that of presencing which they describe in Buddhist terms where it is understood that the human being exists in “two interdependent orders. One is the manifest domain, the domain of manifest phenomena, both tangible and intangible. The other is the... absolute, the transcendent, the universal which is beyond form, beyond thought, beyond any ‘thing’... [and] the human exists, literally, where the two orders intersect” (Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski, & Flowers, 2005, p. 224). These two orders are said to be inseparable and interpenetrating and “presencing can arise to the extent that we

develop the capacity, individually and collectively, to extend our conscious awareness in both domains” (Senge et al., 2005, p. 225). To be a leader according to this concept is to surrender to the realities of both worlds and become a real human being requiring that one first understand one’s self. They argue, in agreement with English (2008), that the greatest tool of the effective leader is self cultivation.

The next book, *Contemplative leadership for entrepreneurial organizations: Paradigms, metaphors, and wicked problems* (Eggert, 1998) comes from the field of organizational leadership but has very explicit religious foundations. According to the cover jacket, Nancy Eggert “has been an attorney and manager for the National Labor Relations Board for 25 years... holds a doctorate in public administration” and is “an ordained minister and current pastor of a Lutheran Church” (Eggert, 1998). Eggert (1998) begins her book with a description of paradigms and a discussion of the variety of organizational images and theories that abound in research on the subject of leadership. Her basic argument is that each theory is justified and evaluated on its own basis. There is no external or neutral ground from which to make judgments about the truth of any particular theory. Never the less, certain images or theories will become dominant at certain points in history and the current paradigm now in dominance is the enlightenment or rational-scientific paradigm which Eggert (1998) summarizes with four thematic categories: control, attachment, efficiency and rationality. In contrast to this basic understanding of the dominant rationalist paradigm Eggert (1998) proposes an alternative contemplative model which, much like that described by Senge, et al. (2005) and Varela et al. (1991) involves an awareness of what is going on “both internally and externally” (Eggert, 1998, p. 107). Eggert (1998) refers to Meister Eckhart’s teachings on contemplation for a paradigmatic description. It is called the fourfold path and it matches, and neatly counters the earlier thematic categories. Instead of

control, a contemplative model would advocate appreciation, instead of attachment, a contemplative model would advocate detachment, instead of efficiency, creativity is proffered and instead of rationality, compassion.

These last two books, represent for me, the best and relatively consistent models for leadership that unites the realms of objectivity and subjectivity. I say this first because they both address the paradoxical nature of material objectivity united with subjective experience openly and with deliberation. The former (Senge et al., 2005) have more material tendencies while the latter Eggert (1998) tends more to the subjective. Yet, they treat each realm with respect. In addition, they bring about this unity both with science and religion - again, two realms of thought which for the modern era have been supposed to be distinct and incommensurable – through a contemplative model. The contemplative style appeals to my own introverted nature. I am a natural introvert and have lived a contemplative lifestyle for many years now. Introversion is a description first articulated by Carl Jung in his book *Psychological Types* (Cain, 2012). Introversion and its alternative extroversion are together considered one of the central building block pairs of personality. As an introvert, I am drawn to “the inner world of thought and feeling” (Cain, 2012, p. 10) and repelled by the Harvard Business School myth of charismatic leadership (Cain, 2012). So much of what I have read, and much of my experience of life confirms that at least for me, the model of leadership that would be most fitting is that offered by these last two readings. Beyond that, given that most people in North America (despite appearances) are introverted (Cain, 2012) I suspect that I am not the only one who feels this way. Thus I am making an argument for balance, perhaps even a swing to the other (more introverted) side as it would be more representative of a cross section of the normal population of (certainly) Americans, and in all probability most people in general. Yet I think there is a much larger well

that can be tapped which I will bring to further light when discussing Organizational Aesthetics below.

Educational leadership/management seen from the scientific perspective

The field of leadership, like the field of education is dominated by the materially objective perspective rather than the experientially subjective perspective. In what follows, I will articulate the scientific view as it has developed in leadership and organizational studies beginning first with insights from comparative education followed by organizational studies.

The comparative international education perspective.

I return to the neo-institutional description as representative of the materially objective viewpoint coming out of comparative international education studies. According to Meyer and Ramirez (2003) schooling is becoming more and more standard due to “world pressures toward nation-state standardization and educational homogeneity” (Meyer and Ramirez, 2003, p. 116). This standardizing effect is explained as a result of the need for nation states to demonstrate their commitment to being respectable members of world society on one hand, but also due to the “worldwide integration of the educational sciences and professions” (Meyer and Ramirez, 2003, p. 117). The mechanisms for the diffusion of educational standards are all technical. They are: the “rationalized identities of nation-states” (Meyer and Ramirez, 2003, p. 117), the “doctrines of individual citizenship” (Meyer and Ramirez, 2003, p. 117) and the rational institution of educational systems in common technical ideas” (Meyer and Ramirez, 2003, p. 117). All of these descriptions it should be noted are not descriptions of the unforced force of the better argument such as would derive from the lifeworld according to Habermas (1984), but the delinguistified processes of the system. Direction is clearly indicated to come from systemic and scientific imperatives rather than the voice of the participants. Meyer and Ramirez (2003) claim that this

description is far more significant for comparative studies of schooling today than those which would describe more localized (i.e. subjective) factors.

In its most extreme the institutionalism I present here views institutions as the fundamental building blocks of society *and* source of culture (Wiseman & Baker, 2006). Specifically, “institutions are thought of as packages of culture” (Wiseman & Baker, 2006, p. 4). Here the authors fuse social organization with culture. If such a theory turned out to be operant in actuality then we would have to confirm that Habermas’s (1987) colonization thesis has become fact, where institutional schooling has overcome the lifeworld that produced it, not merely as a single occasion, but as an ongoing dynamic. In addition, such a case of colonization would be a perfect example of Heller’s (1999) marriage of two imaginary institutions (technological and historical). Heller claims that chaos is the offspring of such an unholy matrimony. According to her the wedding of these immense opposites would be irrational in the sense that it “uses the vocabulary of historical imagination while mobilizing it for the sake of technological imagination” (Heller, 1999, p. 161.) Bodies and minds are threatened “by losing the capacity and the opportunity to side with one imaginary institution against the other, or to cope with their contradictions and coexistence, and thus to accept choice and contingency” (Heller, 1999, p. 162). These are dramatic claims, but they do touch on the nerve of my own interest in this topic as I have often felt that schooling is not merely transitioning to a new stage in development but actually becoming frozen in a kind of totalitarian set of regulations that have global proportions where schooling as an institution established by humans for humans is being transformed by degrees into a place where humans are becoming institutionalized. The question of humanizing or institutionalizing education is at the heart of the traditional divide between manager and leader (English, 2008; Ibbotson & Darsø, 2008). Wiseman (2005), suggests that rather than

characterizing principals as leaders (who do have power to effect change), principals would be better off to recognize the overwhelming institutional effect of schools and consider themselves bureaucratic managers first, and leaders second.

The science perspective in organizational studies.

Stepping away from CIE, towards organizational studies, Frederick Taylor is the point of origin for management and leadership as a science (Eggert, 1998; English, 2008; Taylor, Ladkin & Statler, 2014). Yet, according to English (2008) Taylor's science was not genuine. Rather, Taylor's concern was directed more toward efficiency and the "one best way" to do anything. He was one of the first to separate the doing (of workers) from the thinking (of managers) and it was the thinkers who were to exercise complete authority. Total Quality Management is direct offspring of this sort of thinking. And, while Taylor's pseudo-science has remained to this day within management circles, other more genuinely scientific approaches have entered the field. According to English, Herbert Simon's book *Administrative Behavior* (1945) introduced behaviorism and logical positivism to the field where "logical positivists believed that in order for something to be true, it had to be verifiable by experience, chiefly observation" (English, 2008, p. 152). Efficiency continued to be important, but rationality and verification by observation were added to the list of management essentials. Structuralism soon followed with the works of such people as Katz and Kahn's (1966) publication of *The Social Psychology of Organizations*. This signalled a period in which management was to pay attention to "whole units or structures" (English, 2008, p. 154) and attempt to understand the organization as a complete system. Four major themes deriving from this period and prevailing until the current age are that (1) management is value neutral, using analytical rationality (Eggert, 1998; Taylor, Ladkin & Statler, 2014) which results in (2) a primary focus on efficiency (English, 2008;

Eggert, 1998) (3) through controlled planning (Eggert, 1998; English, 2008) further resulting in (4) the creation of context independent procedures for treating “standard syndromes” (Taylor, Ladkin and Statler, 2014). In such a framework, managers are expected to control the situation or they will be fired (Taylor, 2015). Perhaps that is the reason management and business administration is so “penetrated by seriousness” (Koivunen, 2009, p. 17) an observation of particular relevance to private schools who are more directly associated with business though public schools are also implicated (Phillips & Schweisfurth, 2007; Bray, 1990).

To summarize the current dominant rational scientific perspective Nancy Eggert (1998) combines the insights of various writers from Fritjof Capra, Willis Harmon, Duane Elgin and Burrell and Morgan pointing out that above all the scientific paradigm represents the predominance of rational thought characterized as “linear, focused, and analytic” (93) and includes discrimination, measurement and categorizing within its functions (see also Doll, 1993). Welch (2003) adds that this rationalism is thought to be objective and value free. Nature is perceived in mechanistic terms and viewed as a lifeless physical mass made of increasingly elementary particles that interact in a complex but predictable manner according to natural laws. It can be known and controlled, and this increasing knowledge and control leads to human progress. The methods for achieving modernistic knowledge and control are logic, experiments and field study (Gao, 2008). Scientific work in keeping with this model tends to be realist, positivist, determinist and nomothetic (Eggert, 1998).

Educational leadership/management seen from the art perspective.

The comparative international education perspective.

As with the previous view, I begin with comparative international education. In keeping with my category of art being the realm of subjective experience it should be no surprise to find

that the alternative view put forward by critical theorists claims that the world culture theory described by the neo-institutionalists is powerfully affected by researcher subjectivity (Carney, Rappleye & Silova, 2012; Carnoy, 1999). Critical theorists claim that neo-institutional arguments of loose coupling or decoupling (which are supposed transition points of school systems to a world culture of schooling) are in reality bridges between neo-institutionalists empirical observations of ‘what appears to be,’ and their subjective understandings of ‘what ought to be.’ Their science of objectivity is thus reduced to what is a “conceptual perspective and preference, not an empirical product” (Carney, Rappleye & Silova, 2012, p. 374). The absence of studies indicating a shared meaning between models and the schooling contexts demonstrates that “world culture theory cannot uphold the notion of global “sameness” if forced to move beyond policy texts” (Carney, Rappleye & Silova, 2012, p. 376). Neo-institutional ‘science’ of schooling in the end is viewed as a form of coercion in which world culture myths become models that establish world culture theorists as arbiters of the success of educational institutions around the world. World culture theory thus tends to construct the thing it intends to describe.

Rather than a world culture of schooling, critical theorists describe a world of flows (Tilly, 2004) whether it be populations, ideas and technologies or coordinated events. With regard to schools there seems to be more convergence among analysts and researchers (Steiner-Khamsi, 2004) than there is within school systems and the expectation is that there will never be a global hybrid. Rather, each community will define education as it sees fit. That being said, there have been pressures for educational change and this has generally shifted in recent decades from teacher based initiatives to changes imposed from outside primarily as a result of political and economic pressures (Goodson, 2006; Steiner-Khamsi, 2004). The increasing intensity of mandated changes have not resulted in greater educational results. Instead the professional

commitment of teachers is diminishing as many school changes seem “professionally naïve and against the heart and spirit of professional belief” (Goodson, 2006, 221). While critical theory is helpful in exposing the faults of meta-theories and their proponents, the weakness of critical theory is that it does not seem to offer much of an alternative. In a call for comparative researchers to advance more studies established on a hermeneutical base combined with critical theory Welch (2003) articulates a hope for scholarly work that counters the universalistic pretensions of mainstream science. Yet, one cannot help but feel that the critical hermeneutics he speaks of that are “ultimately... aimed at emancipation” (Welch, 2003, p. 223) may attempt to bypass some of the realities toward which the material sciences stand open-eyed. For some people, any form of restriction whatever can feel like oppression (Chesterton, 1929) and the arts to which we now turn are famously known for surpassing all boundaries. As we move to a view of the arts, it will be good to keep this tendency in view.

The organizational aesthetics perspective.

I now turn to a young, but rapidly growing academic enterprise in the interests of constructing an alternative to institutionalism, critical theory or the rational scientific model in general, organizational aesthetics. In its largest context, organizational aesthetics has its roots in the humanities (Irgens, 2014; English, 2008) and draws in everything that post-Cartesian cognitive rationalism left out (Chytry, 2008). Geographically, organizational aesthetics centers primarily around the Scandinavian countries but has representation in Canada (Banff Leadership Centre), the United States, as well as New Zealand (Bathurst, 2006). At its core is the individual, whose purpose is to live life as a work of art (Taylor, 2013) and in the process cause all relationships and work settings to likewise become works of art. Aesthetics is about “how we relate to, interact with, and shape the world” (Irgens, 2014, p. 87). Chytry agrees with Strati that

the philosophical aesthetics of the eighteenth-century, from which the field derives sustenance, is “one of the greatest upheavals in the paradigm that defines humankind” (Strati as cited in Chytry, 2008, p. 61).

Aesthetic awareness begins in the human body actively engaged in the world (Ladkin & Taylor, 2010). The body is where we experience sensations and emotions which we then try to make sense of through a kind of inner work (Woodward & Funk, 2010). Aesthetic awareness is an appreciation of such experiences not just as interesting diversions but as sources of meaning and this form of perceptivity can be applied to life as it is in art (Springborg, 2010; Dewey, 1934). As one sorts out the meaning of these experiences a person may create descriptions of the sense making that results. This sense making takes forms as diverse as theories, procedures or objects which then become conceptions of yesterday’s sensemaking while at the same time becoming our tacit or explicit assumptions for further sense making in the future.

This sensing and making sense of the world of organizational leadership requires certain practices of the leader who attempts to shape the organization into a kind of conceptual or kinetic art form. The first practice is to keep sustained attention to one’s senses rather than one’s concepts (Springborg, 2010). It involves inner self exploration (Woodward & Funk, 2010), and a willingness to be in a state of unknowing (Taylor, 2013) allowing meaning to emerge. It is the beginning of Joseph Campbell’s journey of the hero (Woodward & Funk, 2010; English, 2008) into the unknown and may be felt as a call to adventure, including the possibility of “confusion and bewilderment” (Woodward & Funk, 2010). This is a place where the usual rules do not apply. This first practice follows with a process of reflection or self understanding. Woodward & Funk (2010) call this the beginning of hermeneutical work of meaning making. It involves noticing details and relationships, and the use of “past experiences, . . . emotions, memories, and

images to explore the felt experience” (Woodward & Funk, 2010, p. 305) which are perhaps relived or experienced in such a manner as the peculiar taste of the experience may be ascertained. Once a particular meaning suggests itself, the artist leader begins to craft and stabilize the meaning (Woodward & Funk, 2010) and give consideration to all possible media for its expression such as one’s self, organizational events, one’s relations etc. (Springborg, 2010). Communicating this meaning in the cultural space allows the meaning to stabilize and be judged for plausibility (Woodward & Funk, 2010). The media one works with plays a role in choosing the appropriate aesthetic. Various media have been mentioned and in schools this would include one’s own body, one’s psycho/social self, the organization and its products and finally teacher/parent/student relations.

There are several problems with art and artistry in education, particularly private schools. The first is that even in art organizations such as art galleries or symphony orchestras, mere romanticism will not do (Koivunen, 2009). Yet, as Koivunen (2009) points out, artists do lean that way. They fear that the market will somehow tarnish the purity of their work. I likewise have in past occasions felt that the system (whether it was government or business) would infect my own teaching and likewise my leadership in education. I left my teaching job in the North Carolina out of just such a fear and I have seen many leave their jobs in Kuwait for what I presume to be similar reasons. Another danger is that the arts are famously known for their avant-gardism. There is something in the arts that always presses beyond the bounds. This, no doubt, justifies the statement that the manager works within the system while the leader works beyond it (English, 2008). However, leaders in a school who defy convention can risk causing great damage. A theory based in aesthetics may be supportive of such explorations but what are the risks? What if for example, a strong communal aesthetic is developed in the absence of any

real vigor in studies for example? It is conceivable that a totalitarian aesthetics could lead the school to a form of post-modern incoherence (Delanty, 2000). Neither artistic (Chytry, 2008) nor scientific totalitarianism is desired. Rather, each should stand on its own and assert its claims in the face of contradiction. Contradiction creates movement (Koivunen, 2009) like opposing pedals on a bicycle. According to Heller, it is what animates modernity (Heller, 1999). What is sought is an operating and respectful balance between the two views of science and art (Irgens, 2014).

Craft as a possible embodiment of both the science and arts of educational leadership

If we wish to turn to more inclusive categories than those already investigated, one might consider aesthetics as craft. When referring to the art of leadership or aesthetics in organizations, Barry and Meiseik (2010) claim that most often what is being described is craft, rather than art. In the craft of leadership “factual knowledge, recipes, and techniques” (Barry & Meiseik, 2010, p. 333) are intended to be followed in a prescribed and functional manner and “cause and effect, predictability, and objective standards all form important considerations” (Barry & Meiseik, 2010, p. 333). Leadership as craft in this sense is largely about “exemplary arrivals” (Barry & Meiseik, 2010, p. 335) which is to say, making good on clearly specified targets. On the other hand, artistry (which is an element of craft) is about extraordinary departures where, as explained earlier, the artist leader breaks bounds and departs from the “usual emotional and cognitive states” (Barry & Meiseik, 2010, p. 335). Arrivals and departures are again oppositional terms yet they can be united in the concept of craft.

Picking up the trail from Barry and Meiseik (2010), Taylor, Ladkin and Statler (2014) suggest normative foundations for the craft of management. Until now the two views I have been articulating represent incorporeal concepts – science (objective viewing) and art (subjective

feeling). “Craft however is neither directed primarily toward objective analysis or rationally optimal decision-making, nor toward the expression of beauty or giving audiences new experiences. Instead,... craft involves an embodied relationship between the craftsman, whatever she or he is making, and the people who will use it” (Taylor, Ladkin and Statler, 2014, p. 578). In these living relationships objectivity and subjectivity become orientations in live experience. Embodied action is the unification of these principles, orientations, modes of operation within a single corporeal being and that unity extends outward to the product and the people using it. According to Taylor, Ladkin and Statler (2014) craft management involves an ethic of care that is directed toward three realms: care about materials with which one works, care for the process of production, and care for the users of the products. There is an intrinsic ethic involved in the concrete realities that an abstract science cannot produce, yet there is a particularity involved that mere romance will not satisfy either. Care for materials reflects a need to recognize limits (something for which science is helpful), care for the users reflects a need to recognize the subjectivity of every individual person (something for which aesthetics is helpful) and finally care for process is the middle of the middle. It is standing in the gap and “is at the heart of an ethics of care” (Taylor, Ladkin & Statler, 2014, p. 583; cf. Palmer, 1998).

A useful complement to this orientation comes from Purser (2013) in “Zen and the art of organizational maintenance.” He too advocates an ethic of care and goes on to articulate what sort of aesthetic this ethic would imply. Directing attention to the subject / object duality, he calls the “primordial dilemma or paradox” (Purser, 2013, p. 51), he proposes organizational maintenance as a mindfulness practice which is “cultivated by appreciating, embodying and expressing Zen-inspired aesthetic principles within organizations” (Purser, 2013, p. 35; cf. Eggert, 1998; Varela et al, 1991). He suggests an aesthetic principle of quality that corresponds

well with the idea of leadership as craft. Quality is a non-dual concept, being “neither subjective nor objective, yet both subjects and objects depend upon quality” (Purser, 2013, p. 50). Nor is this a fusion. Both objectivity and subjectivity are independently active. Rather, it is a centering principle around which both subjects and objects may pendulate. Quality, as an aesthetic principle becomes a sort of gravitational concept. Leadership focusing on quality craftsmanship begins by working towards one’s own personal wholeness and non-dualism through the practices of Zen (or other spiritual practices, I might add – Senge et al, 2005; May, 1991; Eggert, 1998) which then extend outward to materials, processes and persons.

The basic idea being aimed for here, and one possible answer to the dilemma I have outlined, is a craft of leadership based on the normative foundation of caring, resulting in educational leadership products that may be characterized aesthetically as being of high quality achieved through non-logical bodily practice starting with the leader’s own spiritual practice of non-duality but extending that sense of non-duality to the education of students and the satisfaction of their parents and others directly involved with the school. Organizations, Purser (2013) claims, have quality when they are at one with themselves, when the organization and the products it produces bring about the conditions necessary for the realization of authenticity for everyone – a worthwhile and visionary challenge indeed. Such a conception seems to answer the challenge of dysfunctional social processes put forward by Habermas (Finlayson, 2005), Heller’s call for ethical individuals to make of their contingency a life that allows or encourages others to make the same positive choices (Heller, 1999; Tormey, 1998), Varela et al.’s (1991) call of enaction or emergence (in this case of quality) that finds the middle way between nature and experience and Jung’s call for individuation as a solution to general neurosis of the age through equilibration (Stevens, 1994).

Yet, there is another aspect that is perhaps peculiar to leadership in education. Leadership is not just for a company or public administration offering an educational product (as the objective stance might understand it to be). Nor is it, as viewed from the perspective of subjectivity, the opportunity for offering an experience that students will never forget. Taken from the ethical point of view outlined above and in keeping with Heller (1999), the educational leader would seek to provide the sort of education that provides access not only to a world, but a life and this would call for the vision of a therapist who is able to help people find a balance between Jung's (Stevens, 1994) biological and spiritual facts of existence in order that students (and perhaps their parents, staff or others involved with the school) to ultimately become individuated people who attain to self knowledge (Semetsky, 2010). This integrating process would require of the leader that he or she incorporate some of Jung's analytical methods, understood as an antidote to Habermas's pathologies (Finlayson, 2005). As an educational leader with an attitude of non-dualism (Purser, 2013), one is not merely seeking to provide a product, one is aiming to enjoin a community as together with the leader, the school community experiences personal growth and transformation (English, 2003).

CHAPTER 3 – Methodology

Introduction

The research question guiding this study is: What are the challenges and benefits of undertaking the task of educational leader as both science and art while keeping steady reference to the aporia of objectively understood reality and subjective experiences of that same reality? I turn to qualitative research for its interpretive, adaptable, context sensitive process oriented posture (Maxwell, 2005) as a means by which I may observe the dynamic interplay between the objective and subjective worlds of experience. The design adopted for this study is narrative autoethnography of the evocative kind, a methodology that focuses on the researcher as both instrument and site of study. It is a method used to approach the study of social issues, problems or dilemmas through the lens of personal experience (Tamas, 2013) and convey those experiences in an integrated manner. In the following chapter I will describe both narrative and ethnographic approaches, explain the data collection and representation methods I have adopted and describe how I validated the data.

Understanding the world narratively

Scholarly personal narrative with its roots in various social and humanities disciplines (Creswell, 2007) is appropriate to this study because of its direct focus on experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). From this perspective we do not live in reality itself (Varela et al., 1990; Nash, 2004). Rather, all reality is filtered through our imagination (Peterson, 1997b) even if it is the technical imaginary of science (Heller, 1999). The narrative researcher uses the art of story to understand his subjective experiences of real world encounters thus balancing the two worlds of objectivity and subjectivity. Clandinin & Connelly (2000) view this form of inquiry as occurring

at the boundary between grand narrative (where universally applicable truths are sought after) and narrative (where personal truths are sought after).

Narrative is fascinating in the same way that numbers are fascinating. Numbers are real and have consequence even though they are not merely invisible, they are immaterial (Caldecott, 2009). In addition, number is intimately linked with most of what grounds our understanding of the empirical, material universe. In the same manner that number can be discovered as fundamental to the structures of the material universe, so also narrative is a kind of non-material structure imbedded in the reality of the subjective universe. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) call the subjective universe in which narrative takes place, “three-dimensional narrative inquiry space” (51). This three dimensional space is characterized as interactive, continuous and situated. It is interactive in that narrative engages personal subjectivity with social subjectivity; it is continuous in that any narrated event has a past, present and implied future; and narrative is situated in the sense that a narrated event takes place somewhere and affects how the event is understood.

For Clandinin and Connelly (2000) “narrative thinking is a key form of experience and a key way of writing and thinking about it” (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p. 18). The method is part of the phenomenon it is investigating. Narrative inquiry both aims to make as well as understand meaning. Its contributions are not to “prescribe general applications and uses but rather [create] texts that, when well done, offer readers a place to imagine their own uses and applications” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 42). Narrative investigation is a research tool that opens the door for me to pursue my interest in the meaning of educational leadership which, for the duration of my career both as an educator and educational leader, has appeared to endure an ever more encroaching and prevailing sense of the meaninglessness (Heller, 1999; Taylor, 1991).

Autoethnography

Autoethnography has its roots in cultural anthropology (Creswell, 2007). It has a wide variety of outputs ranging from autoethnography that is more “anthropological and social scientific” (Chang, 2008, p. 46) to that which is more “descriptive or performative storytelling” (Chang, 2008, p. 46). Others characterize the autoethnographic landscape as ranging from “Analytic autoethnography” (Anderson, 2006) fitting a more traditional social science model (Burnier, 2006) to “evocative autoethnography” (Richardson, 1994; Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011) or ethnography that comes from the heart (Denzin, 2006; Ellis, 1999) both of which describe the focus of my interest and the chosen method for this research. Autoethnography is presently making its mark in a variety of disciplines including “anthropology, communication, education, humanities, leadership, management, nursing, religious studies, social work, sociology, performing arts and many other disciplines” (Chang, 2013). The ‘auto’ in autoethnography is autobiography (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011). In the case of this study, it is a story (and thus a narrative) about my life. I observe myself. The ‘ethno’ in autoethnography means I am also studying about culture or cultures (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011). This means that my story is meant to be useful in terms of understanding culture. This perspective has been understood as a lens on culture (Chang, 2008), but I also approach my life as a kind of micro-culture (Reed-Danahay, 1997) that signifies on its own merits (Nash, 2004). In my function as both field and instrument, I gaze outward on my personal experiences as they occur in objective reality and then gaze back inward on my own subjective reality (Ellis, 1999). This allows me an opportunity to see first-hand how I balance objectivity and subjectivity or science and art, both in my work as an educational leader but also in my research.

My objective is to balance science and art in my work as an educational leader, and to study that work of leadership with a method that likewise uses both science and art. In chapter one, I noted the distinction that C.S. Lewis made between looking along experience and looking at experience and the subsequent challenge that we need to use both perspectives. To activate the art point of view, I will be looking *along* experience. In this way I will take the viewpoint of the one having the experience and recreate that experience in an evocative way so as to allow the reader likewise to have an experience that is prior to analysis. To activate the Science point of view I will be looking *at* experience. In this sense I will be my own ethnographer, taking an external point of view, formalizing my procedures and analyzing the experiences in an objective manner. It is important to note that in a hybrid model such as this, I will not follow the perfect ideal for science nor for art. Presuming, as I do, that the most extreme scientific view (if considered along the left side of a continuum) would rule out the existence of subjective meaning as anything other than the result of physical processes and the most extreme artistic view (on the right side of the same continuum) would consider science to be merely one story among many others by which we construct reality, one must find a middle ground that is not dogmatically representative of either camp but accommodating of its rival view point. Rather than one eyeball looking at another, creating a cross eyed vision, I prefer to have them work in tandem. Where vision overlaps, there might be greater accuracy, and where vision broadens out we get depth of field.

The appropriateness of evocative narrative autoethnography.

There are many compelling reasons why I have chosen to use autoethnographic methodology. The first is, that it allows me insider access to varieties of the human condition that are difficult to convey in empirical analysis, particularly experiences of pain or contentment,

sorrow or elation, peace or distress. Each of these subjective experiences are more or less meaningless when converted into data charts (Dutta & Basu, 2013) but are never-the-less important indicators of human contact with both the subjective and objective worlds, and are thus critical to a full understanding of interactions between the two.

Another crucial reason for me to pursue autoethnography is that I wish to make my work accessible. I want to “create work that appeals to a variety of audiences, not just academics” (Jones, Adams & Ellis, 2013, p. 37). Laurel Richardson makes the statement that “Qualitative work could be reaching wide and diverse audiences, not just devotees of the topic or author. It seems foolish at best, and narcissistic and wholly self-absorbed at worst, to spend months or years doing research that ends up not being read and not making a difference to anything but the author’s career” (Richardson, 1994, p. 517). Here, Richardson turns the tables on critics of evocative writing by pointing out that narcissism and self absorption can take place with data tables just as easily as it can with introspection.

Appealing to diverse audiences as Richardson suggests, means addressing a variety of purposes. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) ask whether research should be intended for professional or personal purposes. The work I have completed is intended to accomplish both. Parker Palmer claims that “we teach who we are” (Palmer, 1998, p. 2). I have often suggested to teachers that if they are disorganized, they will teach this disorganization to children, if they tend to look at the bright side of life, they will teach this disposition to their students. The personal is always mixed with the professional. I therefore have endeavored to uncover not only “how to know” (Bochner, 2013, p. 51) as it applies to educational leadership (the profession) but “how to live” (Bochner, 2013, p. 51) as a person in educational leadership. As Heller (1999) might put it, I want learning to be more than simply for the purpose of having a world but having a life. I

would like the research I do, and the learning that results, to have application and resonance with a diverse audience such that whatever knowledge gains are made, might be seen as essential to life. “Autoethnography has become a rallying point for those who believe that the human sciences need to become more human” (Bochner, 2013, p. 53). I enjoin this rally, to change the course of research, and I privilege the human factor more so than the institutional.

Data collection and representation.

I take an emic (insider) point of view in two ways, one in the objective world and one in the subjective world. First, I am an insider to the working environment of educational leadership (representing the objective world) as well as all the related historical and cultural forces leading up to and encompassing my involvement in educational leadership. Second, I am the only person able to directly report the history of my own inner experiences in both work and personal life leading up to and including my involvement in educational leadership. Ellis (2004) states that “autoethnography refers to writing about the personal and its relationship to culture... Back and forth autoethnographers gaze: First they look at the ethnographic wide angle lens, focusing outward on social and cultural aspects of their personal experience; then, they look inward, exposing a vulnerable self that is moved by and may move through, refract, and resist cultural interpretations” (Ellis, 2004, p. 37). The unique value of autoethnography is precisely in this place where the two worlds meet (Anderson & Glass-Coffin, 2013; Dutta & Basu, 2013) and I focus on those moments where either there is a great sense of dissonance between the two worlds or alternatively those moments of epiphany in which a clear sense of unity or insight is gained.

As an autoethnographer, I recognize and honor the deep connections I have with the communities within which I move (Anderson & Glass-Coffin, 2013) yet these connections and this insider position have multiple layers and contradictions. By birth, I am Canadian, but

Canadians in my generation are raised to understand that their culture is multiple. Beyond the fact that we are officially a bilingual country, my own heritage represents elements of German, Ukrainian, Norwegian, French and Irish backgrounds. In addition, I did not live and grow in one local community. Rather I lived in at least five different cities across the country, including at least ten different residential communities attending twelve different schools. After getting work as a teacher I worked in Canada for thirteen years, the United States for two years, Kuwait for nine years and now my third year in Korea. I have had intimate and enduring relations with an atheistic citizen of communist China, a Muslim Malaysian living in Singapore, a conservative Christian Jamaican and various relations in Canada all of which have had significant formative influence in my life. I have married a Buddhist wife and I often long for Thailand where we have a home, but beyond this I also miss every place I have ever lived and every person I ever loved with similar longings. I have always considered myself a global citizen, but my legal rights are based on the Canadian passport that allows me access to these various geographic regions around the globe. When I teach in Korea as a Canadian, I am a visible minority who represents in some respects the inferior culture (viewed from a nationalistic Korean point of view) yet I am promoting (imposing?) a Canadian curriculum which contradicts many of the cultural assumptions of Korean parents. Yet, the curriculum we teach embraces diversity. As an educational leader, who has come to this place in his career as principal, what culture do I represent? Am I an insider or an outsider? From the point of view of a Korean, perhaps I am an outsider. From the point of view of my own experiences and self identification, I am a global citizen just as they.

Beyond this, there is a further question. How stable is my own self identity? Am I, the writer preparing this study, monolithic? Or, am I, like Canadian culture, multiple?

Autoethnographic writing tends to view the self as pliable and shifting depending on context (Jones, Adams, & Ellis, 2013). Narrative, too, recognizes the impact of plot on character development but despite this context dependent nature of character, there is also the self that lives through all of the experiences and looks back on them as a unity. Beyond the distinction between a multiple or singular identity based on contextual influences, there is also the differentiation between conscious self and sub or unconscious self (Dutta & Basu, 2013). Or, the difference between the self we converse with in our inner dialogue and that self which we present to others. Or, yet again, what about the self that is yet to emerge? The self that is just waiting for the right context, such as this study, to be identified (Tamas, 2013)? Who is it that is writing this very moment; the one “whose determination is frightening” (Tamas, 2013, p. 196). The basic premise of my researcher position is simple, but it quickly gets complicated. As a researcher I view the external world while at the same time viewing the internal world and interactions of both worlds together (Denzin, 2013), but a deeper analysis reveals multiple layers of identity (Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011) and how these layers interact is complex.

Despite the many advantages of autoethnography, there are challenges, “particularly for graduates seeking to pursue autoethnographic research for theses and dissertations” (Anderson & Glass-Coffin, 2013, p. 65). One of the main challenges of autoethnography is its “lack of methodological clarity” (Anderson & Glass-Coffin, 2013, p. 64). This lack of clarity is due to the manner in which data compilation moves by degrees to data representation. In order to bring some clarity I will express the methodology in a step by step method as follows:

1. Field notes: The biographical project begins “with the sting of childhood memory, with an event that lingers and remains in the person’s life story” (Denzin, 2014, p. 28). “What is recalled from the past forms the basis of autoethnographic data”

(Chang, 2008, 71). Thus, to begin my research I organized experiences of my past chronologically (Ellis, 1999) sketching out the main epiphanies (Denzin, 2014) or major challenges that structured my life history and informed my present circumstances as an educational leader. These are notes, written from memory that were grouped into early life, teaching life, and educational leadership as narratively speaking each of them built upon the other. These episodes helped to understand how I become involved in educational leadership and what makes the objective / subjective dilemma especially compelling in my adult profession. Both epiphanies and major challenges functioned as important touch points between inner and outer reality providing opportunities to derive meaningful understanding.

2. Field notes enriched by artifacts for memory production: I enriched these events, including as much insider detail as possible (Allen-Collinson, 2013) making use of collected artifacts (see below for a full description of potential artifacts). Artifacts assist the autoethnographer in becoming one with the memory, a process that Ellis calls “systematic sociological introspection” (Ellis, 1999, p. 671).
3. Research journal: As the time line and story developed, I kept a journal in which I maintained a posture of openness and wonderment to the experiences I gathered. In the journal I bracketed out (Allen-Collinson, 2013) my past experiences. To bracket out means that I adopt the posture of an ethnographer peeking into the world of the other, even though that other happens to be me. Bracketing in the pure sense is not possible, but it does represent an attitude shift toward the data. It is an attempt to be more critical, rather than immersed. To begin this process I did impressionistic readings of the data collected in my field notes in an effort to identify the big picture

as it developed and recorded any themes or sub-themes that I saw appearing (Allen-Collinson, 2013).

4. Field notes transitioning to data representation: As the details of the timeline built, I began to shape them into representations fitting a narrative frame analogous to making charts or graphs. Episodes within this narrative take a number of forms – including personal essay, poetry, journal, fiction and creative non-fiction fitted together within a narrative frame. These are forms I am most familiar and proficient with, and are commonly mixed in autoethnography (Chang, 2008). The exact form emerged and was fitted to develop an episodic narrative. Further, I used literary tools such as foreshadowing, conflict, dialogue, metaphor etc. It was necessarily an experimental task with many false starts. Each of these experimental methods further invited the process of emotional recall, allowing for more details and nuance to be revisited (Ellis, 1999).
5. Research journal: The research journal continued as I both observed the data, and observed myself observing. Perspectives change and as I viewed past events and my prior interpretations of them, new understandings were formed as a result of this investigation.
6. Data representation/analysis: As I worked with the narrative representations a personal sense of saturation began to take place and patterns were observed at which point I selected material to comprise the data chapters. This is the stage where the act of data collection started to transform into the craft of writing as I considered how best to represent the information in the most compelling manner. The data chapters, with their episodic selection of mixed styles in a narrative form, serve both as data

compilation, as well as preliminary analysis since it is believed that story is itself a form of analysis (Ellis, 1999).

7. Data analysis: A more traditional form of rational analysis follows in chapter ten.

The production of this chapter involved reading and re-reading chapters four to nine as a means of data-immersion (Allen-Collinson, 2013). Literary tools are more suited for analysis of story; in this case a story where the plot is built upon issues surrounding the tension between my own subjectivity and the objective world.

Because chapters four to nine form a story, I use literary analysis in search of themes and subtext rather than mathematical oriented coding. The use of literary conventions such as metaphors, clichés, characterization, etc. observed in the text (Keightley, 2010) aid in gathering the meaning. The research journal was used at this stage to recall earlier thoughts that may have become lost during the period of data construction and thus served as a prod for analysis. After the analysis, conclusions are drawn and recommendations made for further research.

It should be noted that though this step by step process produces some degree of clarity in terms of planning, and description the actual work is far less linear. There tends to be a high degree of overlap that takes place among the steps (Chang, 2008) and may be characterized as an “emerging-out-of-the-fog-experience” (Chang, 2008, p. 121).

Memory recollections, as noted above, were informed by external world supports. For observations of the external world I opportunistically gathered data from the following sources as they seemed necessary to enhance or refine memory recall:

- Various gathered artifacts: movies, books, journals, dream journals, poems, margin notes, collected sayings and quotations, letters and instant messages, photographs etc.

- Literature: any relevant literary, historical, poetic, theoretical, philosophical, empirical or any other scholarly work relevant to themes that arise in the study.
- Comments from others that may through conversation provoke memories that had otherwise been lost

These artifacts were ready to hand for use as sources of data and have been collected over a life time of experiences. Because the proposed study was an emergent design, it was difficult to identify in advance which artifacts would be most useful but anything collected until the close of this study was considered. As the study advanced and data was gathered the artifacts that are included for the provision of greater factual detail or enhanced memory recollection were catalogued.

Validating data.

Working from memories and writing evocatively blends objective and subjective understanding in a manner that shifts attention from correspondence of fact to correspondence of mood or feeling. While avoiding the reduction of statistical methods, evocative autoethnography risks the opposite error of being additive. Yet, validity and reliability are risks inherent in any study – misrepresentation either by subtracting from or adding to what is actual. The researcher’s task is to be open-eyed about such risks and make choices accordingly. I prefer to make the additive, rather than subtractive error in order to retain wholism and thus the better part of accuracy when studying a life.

Further, because autoethnography focuses on the views of a single individual, the study runs the risk of researcher bias. However, Lynn Bloom, speaking of creative non-fiction writers, (we may insert autoethnographic writers) “live – and die – by a single ethical standard, to render faithfully... their understanding” (Bloom, 2003, p. 278). This ethical standard foregrounds the

fact that truth comes in ‘versions’ according to the understanding of the one presenting it. And, Varela et al claim that “there is no abstract knower of experience that is separate from the experience” (Varela et al., 1990, p. 26). My plan therefore is to clearly present my own perspective as much as I am capable, including values, emotions and all the subjective elements that I bring as a researcher to the field in order to be the most truthful. One of the advantages of a work such as this is that it significantly diminishes the alternate bias that usually results when emotions are removed from observation and analysis. As Elliot Eisner asks “What can be more biased than emotionally eviscerated fact describing conditions or situations that are emotionally significant to those in the situation being described? Distortion can result from what is put in, but also from what is left out” (Eisner, 2005, p. 72). Never-the-less, because of autoethography’s focus on interpretive and artistic presentation of events, data validation becomes a focus for criticism. I wish to respond with the following forms of validation.

One method by which I make my data convincing is by the multitude of presentations that I make. The relevant concept here is crystallization of data rather than triangulation. As Richardson points out a triangle is rigid, and fixed along a two dimensional plane whereas a crystal is three dimensional and “combines symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes... and angles of approach. Crystals grow, change, and alter, but are not amorphous” (Richardson, 1994, p. 522). Most particular for the work I am attempting, both with my topic and method, “crystals are prisms that reflect *externalities* [italics mine] and refract *within themselves* [italics mine], creating different colors, patterns, arrays, casting off in different directions. What we see depends upon our angle of repose” (Richardson, 1994, p. 522). In order to be consistent with the worlds of experience I have proposed, I will crystallize my data by compiling the information in a multitude of formats such as personal essay, poetry, journals, creative non-

fiction, fiction, etc. permitting a variety of points of view, approaches or frames thus representing the complexity (Tracy, 2010) of a phenomena as it is contextually understood.

Another method I used is reliability checks. According to Ellis (1999) since language is not transparent and since there is no single standard to truth, validity has less to do with an accurate recording of the facts (Bochner, 2000 in Giorgio, 2013) as it does a proper rendering of the situation she calls verisimilitude such that the rendering of the experience is “lifelike, believable and possible” (Ellis, 1999, p. 674). To capture it in its complexity however, I did at times invite other members who are characters in the presentation of the data I compile to comment with their own interpretations. These comments will be included in the data and may or may not influence my interpretation of events or be found in the final representation of the data.

Another form of validity I wished to invoke is that of transferability. Since this study is directed to a paradox that seems rooted in life itself, there should be a high degree of transferability. This means that readers confirm the validity of the study by intuitively and vicariously identifying with the research (Tracy, 2010) as well as responding with questions or challenges (Patton, 2002) something that depends on reader response. Alternatively, I may elicit opposition. The degree of opposition may also be a sign of the validity of my work as it challenges the perspectives of others who may perhaps be deeply entrenched in one or other of the two polarities I have articulated. Ultimately, in this sense validity depends on the degree to which it elicits a sense of possibility for readers.

A final consideration is aesthetic merit. If the goal of the ethnography is to evoke an experience, and if artistry of presentation is required to convey the experience then aesthetics becomes another element of validating the data. A work lacking a powerful aesthetic is less likely to convey the experience than a work that is well presented. Thus, the use of such things as

“dramatic recall, metaphors, images, characters, unusual phrasings, puns, subtexts, and allusions” (Richardson, 1994, p. 521) are required to bring about a mood or feeling tone. Through an artful construction of “a sequence of events” (Richardson, 1994, p. 521) I should be able to invite the reader into my story and, it is hoped, the reader will experience the work vicariously with me. Should readers be successfully engaged in the story, they can then further determine the validity of the text as it applies to their own experiences.

Producing new perspectives and engaging popular audiences.

Once my research is completed the writing that results becomes a cultural product. In this sense it is a highly objective representation with nothing added or taken away and being a cultural artifact thus represents truly. This is another aspect that allows autoethnography to make a unique contribution. Autoethnography performs possibilities (Alexander, 2013). It takes a stand. “It does not merely accept being heard and included...” but weds “experience,... critical thinking... [and] emotionality of remembrance... that *moves away from facts (pure and simple) and toward meaning (ambiguous and complicated)*” (Alexander, 2013, p. 545). This performance of possibilities allows autoethnographers to propose new perspectives in a manner that has the potential to change our understanding of facts as they exist.

The purpose of this study is to investigate an in-between land, or dynamic interplay of two essential, overlapping and at times opposed worlds of objectivity and subjectivity, the existence of which can create dilemmas and perplexities for a leader. My intent is to address this place of in-between both in my investigative methodology (narrative auto-ethnography) as well as in the subject of my study (balancing science and art in educational leadership) hoping to evoke the challenges and benefits of living and acting on this awareness in educational leadership. Professional literature abounds with scientific approaches to leadership and is

recently developing a niche of artistic approaches to leadership but there is very little that attempts to balance science with art as I propose. In chapters four to nine, I have produced evocative renderings of such lived experience where the narrative structure itself is a form of analysis. Chapter ten will conclude with a more traditional analytic essay where I examine the meanings that may be derived from the narrative.

The increasing use of qualitative research has “provided a way for scholars to answer questions about the nature of reality” (Jones, Adams, & Ellis, 2013, p. 26). Whereas empiricist social science satisfies the need for abstraction, facts, and control autoethnography feeds a hunger for meaning (Jones, Adams, & Ellis, 2013). It brings issues of being and the desire to do meaningful work and lead meaningful lives into circulation (Jones, Adams, & Ellis, 2013). This study is about the way in which the external and internal worlds shape a teacher and a teacher leader, and vice versa. It is about culture and finding one's place in the intersection of competing knowledge claims. The personal knowledge aimed for in this study is likely to challenge a view that sees reality primarily as something external and measurable, or alternatively, that reality is primarily something we ourselves produce. Schools are human institutions and the needs of the institution were never meant to be fulfilled by the humans inhabiting them. Rather, the institution is to serve the human interest. It is hoped that the results of this study contribute to, or awaken (Greene, 1995), an appreciation for the universal subject-object dilemma as it applies to the human and institutional context of schooling and by reinserting issues of general human interest, provide educational leaders with a new way of understanding old facts. Educational leaders will perhaps see something of themselves in the data and “use what they learn to reflect on, understand, and cope with their own lives” (Ellis, 2004, p. 46), thus producing, a greater capacity for self-knowledge, personal transformation (English, 2008; Jones, 2006) and it is hoped “make

happiness more probable” (Bochner, 2013) not only for the people being led, but the leader as well.

Introduction to Data

The purpose of the following data is to evocatively immerse the reader in the narrative so that the reader might experience the events as the writer conveys them holistically, rather than analytically, as an imaginative participant observer (Strati, 1991). Suspension of overt analysis might at first seem strange to some readers. If that is the case, the reader may opt to proceed to the Analysis Chapter 10 and read the summaries of each chapter by stages prior to, or at the completion of each data chapter. However, it is suggested, that as far as possible, the reader might suspend judgement so as to best allow the writing, as story, to have its most subtle and indirect effect.

The following data is intended to be a true account crafted artfully. The craft of writing takes the external facts of the world and mingles it with perception. The process of constructing this narrative follows a subjective as well as objective frame. As Tamas declares “I am waiting to learn what my writing smuggles out into consciousness” (Tamas, 2013, p. 195). Like a swimmer or cyclist, I have made numerous conscious as well as unconscious decisions in order to make my way through this medium of words. It is left to the reader, to join in the movement of these words so as to somatically experience the world as the writer has and interpret accordingly.

“Stories, then, like the lives they tell about... are always open-ended,... subject to multiple interpretations” (Denzin, 2014, p. 5). Presuming that the reader forms interpretations of the data, which may also be thought of as a cultural artifact, enabling the reader to imaginatively become a participant observer (Strati, 1999), he or she will form individual interpretations of the data. Upon reading the analysis chapter, the reader may then direct attention not only to the artifact, in terms of a reader response (interacting with the data on conscious and unconscious

levels), but then the reader may participate with the writer in analyzing the gathered data resulting in co-constructed knowledge (Denzin, 2014).

Chapter 4 – Dark Way Forward

12 schools: A gist list

(1970) Weldon Elementary – Weldon, SK

The first school I went to the one thing I recall is my handprint inside of red clay.

(1970 – 1971) Wascana School – Regina, SK

The second school I went to the one thing I recall are bundles for counting math sticks.

(1971 – 1972) Boughton School – Saskatoon, SK

The third school I went to the one thing I recall is the minty coffee breath of Mrs. West.

(1972 – 1973) Arcola Elementary School – Regina, SK

The fourth school I went to the one thing I recall is skating scallops on the school rink.

(1973 – 1974) Queen Elizabeth School – Regina, SK

The fifth school I went to the one thing I recall is the long haired girl who sat behind me.

(1974) Douglas Park School – Regina, SK

The sixth school I went to the one thing I recall is the French teacher shouting angrily.

(1975) Cloverdale Elementary – Cloverdale, BC

The seventh school I went to the one thing I recall is our letters to cheer the sick girl.

(1975 – 1976) George Lee School – Regina, SK

The eighth school I went to the one thing I recall is boys groping girls at recess.

(1976 – 1978) Sherwood Elementary – Regina, SK

The ninth school I went to the one thing I recall is the flame blowing kid who sold drugs.

(1978 – 1979) Henry Janzen School – Regina, SK

The tenth school I went to the one thing I recall is the pretty teacher asking me out.

(1979 – 1981) Thom Collegiate – Regina, SK

The eleventh school I went to the one thing I recall is drinking on every weekend.

(1981 – 1982) Robert Usher – Regina, SK

The twelfth school I went to I finally learned my math from the teacher who threw the wood block.

Why do I do this? Why am I trying to call up the spirits of the past? As I sit here at my table, looking out the 16th floor window again for another night, for another year, for another decade (how long has it been since I began the task of this doctoral degree)? There is something within me that sees this as part of the mythical challenge of life itself. There is something of the battle between good and evil. I feel compelled, night after night, weary or strong, confused or clear minded to once again open my computer, search for some insight, some pattern, some way to express the inexpressible that brings light and practical insight to myself and by extension

through my words to others. Life at its heart is a mystery. We try to make it comprehensible. We create our methods and our systems, we create / discover knowledge. We live our lives. We get married or don't get married. We have children or don't have children. We have jobs that we love or hate, we share our lives with friends or isolated like me in a small apartment, high on the 16th floor as in a cave, overlooking the small mountains that separate Anyang from the rest of Seoul, South Korea which lies a short distance to the north.

I am married to a Thai woman, and we have had a single child in our late adult years. At the time of writing I am fifty, my wife a few years younger and my son coming up to four years old. They currently reside in a small house in Thailand which I purchased by co-signing a loan under my wife's name though I am the one who provides the sole income that satisfies the monthly payment. Till now, we have never cohabitated longer than the summer break.

My life, to some, may seem rather uneventful, drab or even burdensome. I typically get up at five thirty am, head to work in a van with other teachers to a school that has just opened its doors for the first time last year. I am told that, on the first day of school last year, they did not have any desks. Eight weeks ago, we opened the high school building to accommodate the seventh, eighth and ninth grades, ninth grade being the present highest level in the school with plans for going to tenth grade next year. I teach math, science, PE and art and I have a very full schedule that includes planning not one, two or three annual plans but fifteen! I have approximately fifteen percent of my time set aside for planning and preparation and I work from eight thirty to three thirty most days. I come home on Mondays with energy to spare but when Friday arrives I frequently have little power to do more than let the television watch me. Every evening I lay down for a refresher nap of about one to two hours beginning approximately six thirty pm. When I awake, I turn on Skype and chat casually with my wife and son, or simply let

the camera run as my son plays with his fire truck, garbage truck, or airplane. Often he narrates out loud in his four-year-old way what is happening and sometimes his face fills the camera as he shows me one of his men (off camera of course, I cannot actually see it) or explains that his monster truck has crashed. We named his orange colored Monster Truck *Pumpkin Smasher*. He is happy and this makes me happy.

The other day my wife related a story about how the repair men did not come all day even though they said they would try to identify what causes the leak in our roof. Normally it is said that the repair men do not come in the dry season because when it is dry it is harder to find the source of the leak. So, they promise to come, but by four o'clock the girl at the office tells my wife that the workers were unable to come today. This is Thailand, where my son was born, attends school and loves his *big house* as we call it. This is compared to the small apartment where he spent the first two years of his life on a university campus where my wife was a lecturer. In this apartment, which we still keep for convenience, sitting on the toilet feels like economy class on an airplane. You must be careful not to bang your knees.

Someone observing my circumstances might pity me for the treasures I do not have. I do not have my family with me. I am a cyber daddy. Some would like to shame me and call me a *dead beat dad* for not being present with my son on a daily basis. I have missed all of his birthdays except his birth, which I attended as it was a scheduled caesarean section. In Thailand, thankfully, it is considered normal for the husband to be away while wife and family remain in the home town. I have met many who live this way and thus I do not feel the burden of social shame for my present position. At heart, and for most of my working days, I am and have always been a teacher though regretfully the role of a teacher over the recent decades in many places has been declining on multiple fronts including: respect, remuneration, and working conditions.

Others envy me. I once met with the pastor of the Unitarian Universalist Church in Greensboro North Carolina and he said to me over dinner that there are many at the church who wish they could be living abroad. He was referring to the work I was doing at that time in Kuwait as a science teacher and head of the science department. He said that being a global citizen, working in other countries trying to make an improvement on the world is what many of the people at the church wish to do or support doing.

Currently, my circumstances are not very stable. When I came to Korea I was waiting for my criminal record check (CRC) to be completed in Ottawa, unaware it could take up to six months for a Canadian like myself who had been outside of the country for over 10 years and was only able to send manual, rather than electronic finger prints. I could not work legally in Korea without the completed CRC yet the employer required that I present myself to work at the end of August. I came, naively believing my CRC would be completed *any day now* only to find that the days passed into weeks and my reservoir of cash was being slowly diminished. My employer eyed me daily with greater levels of suspicion. After being told flatly that I could no longer show up for work without my paper work being completed, I volunteered to return to Canada depleting my final cash resources, claim renewed residency by establishing legal residence, acquire a driver's license and then apply for the criminal record check which, for residents should take two weeks to complete. In my case it was three weeks – it turned out that the person who does the paper work decided to take a few days' holiday and left no one in charge – but I was able finally to return to Korea and legitimate myself. The day I went to Fukuoka in Japan to get my visa at the Korean embassy was the same day that the school inspectors from the Korean Ministry of Education came to visit the school and I was not,

obviously, required to disappear out a back door so as to avoid discovery as an illegal worker. I returned a day later and was legitimate.

All that seems long ago now, and instead of facing the uncertain future caused by the slow-slow-slowness of my own government in serving the needs of their offshore citizens, I now faced the specter of less than ideal enrolments. In January we had three seventh grade students, six eighth grade students and six ninth grade students – hardly a basis on which to substantiate the salaries of three full time staff dedicated to their daily education. My salary, though it could be better is definitely not bad and I suppose it is the same for the other teachers. That combined with the new building, the worried looks on the faces of the employers and the loud arguments coming from the meeting room have together not boded well. Other schools similar to ours in Korea, also with British Columbia offshore curricula, have very full enrollments and I believe the owners at our school never anticipated any struggle in filling out their classes. The air is ripe with blame looking to settle on some worthy or unworthy individual. Division is growing. The Korean staff do not speak much with the Western staff. The principal is in an epic battle for control of the daily activities of the school including the acceptance or rejection of new admissions, scheduling, personnel issues (arising out of the need to blame someone). On it goes.

And here I am sitting down with my computer once again. Why do I do it? I have always had the belief that there is much more to life than what appears. Before I sat down tonight I recollected the words of Julian of Norwich who said “All shall be well and all shall be well and all manner of things shall be well” (Julian of Norwich, trans. 2011, p. 11). These words resonated deep within me and I felt a peacefulness take over. I have been told all my life that when times are crazy I seem to be the one with the calm manner, soothing voice, and level head. When I left the science department in Kuwait, the staff who stayed behind said they missed my

stable approach. So, I am here, in South Korea in my 16th floor apartment sitting by the window with my family on Skype. I am negotiating a new contract with an owner who is not sure where the money is going to come from, and I am calm.

One thing I am not is bored. I have not been bored for more years than I can tell, perhaps since I attended Regent College over thirteen years ago. Regent College is a small interdenominational graduate Christian college. The mission of the college is to equip people for the work they are about to do in the world. The college prepares professional ministers of the church, but the focus of their efforts is to support the laity. People preparing for or already immersed in careers as diverse as engineers and academics, farmers and investors, scientists and poets etc. from all around the world attend Regent College at various points in their careers from entry to retirement. During my years at Regent I came to a deep inner sense of stability about my life and that stability and fascination with life has not come to an end. Among other things, Regent introduced me to the paradoxes of living such as the question at the heart of this research. Regent aroused fascination in me. I am fascinated still.

So, here I am. Calm, fascinated and facing a future that by surface appearances seems unstable and increasingly unpredictable. And, oh yeah... my wife will be quitting her job which promises a retirement package if she were only to stay on ten years longer. She and my son are coming to stay with me in the fall. And the current principal may be leaving. And, I may be the one the owners will see fit to replace her. What an adventure! Yet in all of this, what am I thinking about most? I am thinking about the dynamic tension between science and art, or as I have now come to view them – objectivity and subjectivity, outer world and inner world. I am thinking about the possibility that understanding this tension is a necessity and that whatever I

am to discover on this present journey I have taken, when I report it to the world, it will be life changing for someone. That is what I want.

One of the characters in the Robertson Davies (1972) novel *The Manticore* named Liesl speaks to another character by the name of Davey about men such as Freud, Adler and Jung. She said that they were: “all men of extraordinary character, and they devised systems that are forever stamped with that character” (Davies, 1972, 265). She then went on to challenge Davey asking:

“Davey, did you ever think that these three men who were so splendid at understanding others had first to understand themselves? It was from their self-knowledge they spoke. They did not go trustingly to some doctor and follow his lead because they were too lazy or too scared to make the inward journey alone. They dared heroically. And it should never be forgotten that they made the inward journey while they were working like galley-slaves at their daily tasks, considering other people’s troubles, raising families, living full lives. They were heroes, in a sense that no space-explorer can be a hero, because they went into the unknown absolutely alone. Was their heroism simply meant to raise a whole new crop of invalids? Why don’t you go home and shoulder your yoke and be a hero too?” (Davies, 1972, 265-266).

So, perhaps this is the best way to answer why it is that I am here, once again sitting with my computer, typing the words as they pour out. I am daring to make that heroic journey. Heroic, not because of the presumed success of the journey. It may not work out in fact. It is heroic because of this very determination; this continuous return to the computer; this persistent question that seems to call me forward and challenge me to meet with it, wrestle with it, come to some understanding about its moves, its character, its dynamic – and the hope, that all this work

will pay off for someone. That, in some small way, by pressing the keys on my laptop I may nudge the world ever closer to something better.

Nancy Eggert (1998) says “the concept of being at peace or in repose is of great importance in the contemplative tradition. It is at the heart of the discernment process” (Eggert, 1998, p. 186). Central to this posture of repose is the observation not so much of our external circumstances as of our feelings, in particular feelings described as being of desolation or consolation. “Discernment is meant for the times of unclarity and uncertainty, when significant decisions are involved. When there is no obvious rational choice and no clear revelation” (Eggert, 1998, p. 187). My mother symbolizes for me the unending pursuit of facts and clarity. When facing significant decisions in times of uncertainty, it would be true to her nature to gather the facts. The greater the importance of the situation, the greater the need to find security in the facts. But how am I to ascertain certainty from my current external circumstances?

This morning shortly after school started, someone backed a car right in front of the school doors and parked it there, close enough to the door to make entry and exit out of the main building difficult. As I came out that morning heading to my class in the rear building, I noted the car (who could miss it?) and also passed someone standing near the building with a placard draped over his shoulders hanging in front of him. The placard was written in Korean, and the young man also Korean, I guess in his early twenties, stood there looking a bit awkward. I gave him a friendly smile hoping to put him at ease. He seemed simultaneously to relax and then straighten. I soon moved on sensing that he was not supposed to be friendly.

“Did you see that guy outside with the placard?” I asked my colleague Mr. Steiner. No, he hadn’t was the reply, but we broke out into chortles and guffaws as this was just another of a long line of odd events we had come to recognize at our school.

Things began to appear strange early in the year when suddenly late in October the owner called emergency meetings. Instead of going home as usual at the end of the day, we all waited outside the library. As the minutes slowly turned into hours, he called each of us individually to discuss some urgent matters. The teachers and Darlene the principal waited outside staring at each other in a stupor. It was a late Thursday evening. We had just put in a hard day of work, did clubs after school, it was dark outside and the weather was turning cooler. Days such as these, interspersed with sudden withdrawals of certain students, and recent loud arguments overheard from the small library where Jack the owner would close himself up with others, some of whom I did not recognize but guessed were silent partners in the school. Driving home together in the van that night, we really couldn’t quite figure out what the purpose of the meetings were except to ask some of us if we wished to have our salaries spread over twelve months instead of ten.

On my way to lunch, I again passed the young gentleman with the placard and popped into Darlene’s office. She looked up and smiled at me. “Have you seen our protestor?” she asked.

“Yeah, what is that about?”

“Apparently the owners of the building are not getting their rent money. The placard basically complains that we, the tenants, are not paying our rent. They plan to call the media about this issue and have a reporter sent over. Jack knows about it and says he’ll handle it.”

“So, what’s the deal?” I asked. “Does the school just manage their money poorly or is there a cash flow problem? Are we going to be open till the end of the year?”

Darlene smiled in her usual way. “Makes you wonder, doesn’t it?”

My coming upon the information from Eggert about repose being essential to discernment occurred at just the same time as these events were occurring. When I came to my apartment the night of the placard, I felt consolation mixed with a sense of threat. Threat, in the sense that the apartment and the stability of daily living is really only as stable as my job and my job does not feel stable right now. So, I wondered if I was living in an illusion. Yet, I also had feelings of consolation generally about the school and its future because despite the problems, the owners were still spending money as if there is a lot to spread around and despite their complaints of lack, they seemed never the less to have confidence that school will continue forward. They were the ones who truly knew the condition of the finances. My personal consolation overall was that in the worst case scenario, I could find work in Korea if my present ship sunk, even though there might be some uncertainty in the mean time.

Added to this uncertainty was another major financial concern. It related to events as they fell out upon my departure from my former school in Kuwait where I risked losing fifteen to thirty thousand American dollars.

“You’ll never win you know” Mr. Haider, the officer in charge of payroll told me. “Never. The politics in the region are changing my friend. People used to successfully sue their employers, but I think you will not succeed in the current climate.”

“I guess we will have to see” I replied.

It was my ninth year as a teacher and department head in Kuwait. I had been there serving to the best of my ability and bringing about a great number of improvements in the school. The principal respected me, and people in our science department considered our

department among the happiest in the school. By the time I left the school, seventy percent of the teachers who had worked with me had all moved on to higher levels of responsibility as either team leaders, department heads, curriculum specialists, vice principal or principal. No other department head in the school could claim such a record.

Several years prior to my departure a deputy principal position was advertised for the high school. At that time, many people in elevated positions including my own principal, other vice principals as well as my colleagues all spoke positively to me with the kind of nods and winks that let you know I was next in line. However, it didn't turn out that way. Someone else who had just come to the school in the last two years took the position. I was mildly shocked because of what I had been led to believe, and more so because the person who did get the position seemed a relative stranger and by my assessment not especially competent. I received a note from the director letting me know that I did not get the position and that I was to be assured it was not because I was unqualified. I was complemented, but what was he trying to say?

A year later, another deputy principal position, this time in the middle school came up. I was certain I would gain this post as I was a middle school teacher. Melissa, the principal and I, were close at that stage and I knew she respected me. However, again, I missed the position. Someone in my own department, a teacher and friend whom I had more or less mentored, took the role. I made plans to leave the school that summer, but as I prepared to go to a job fair another posting came up for deputy principal in the elementary school. Once again, I decided to stick it out by signing another year contract to see the outcome of an application for vice principal. I did not wish to change schools if I could avoid it. Once again I applied. Once again I had a very good feeling from conversations with the principal of my suitability for the role. However, once again I missed the selection. In hind sight I recognize now that everyone who

took the three vice principal roles were all bilingual. They all spoke both English and Arabic and I believe now, looking back on it, that language was a greater qualifying factor than leadership per se. I was annoyed.

So, despite the fact that I already signed a contract for a tenth year, I began looking for work and in a very short time spotted an opportunity to work in a British Columbia school located in Korea. This was pretty ideal as British Columbia is my home province and I felt it might signal a possible return to Canada. I inquired and asked if they might have a vice principal position available and the discussion I had at that time indicated that yes I could have a vice principal position and that a principal position would be available the following year. About a week later Victoria Canadian Academy (VCA) made a job offer for a teacher position only, and the salary and benefits would have been a step back for me. I declined the offer telling them there would be no benefit for me and wished them all the best as they continued their search. A week later, they offered a vice principal position and better benefits. I accepted, and as a result wrote my letter of resignation, resulting in my need to break contract with Al-Eissa. I had never broken a contract before in my life.

There were penalties for breaking contract. The main penalty would come out of my indemnity. Indemnity is an accrual of salary that takes place during one's stay at the school. For each year of the first five years of school an additional two weeks of salary would be paid on departure. For each year beginning the sixth year of service an additional month's salary would be paid on departure. I had completed 9 years of service so I was entitled to six and a half months of salary payout. My penalty for breaking contract was to lose two of those months. I understood this matter and agreed to it so when the form came around explaining the matter, I signed alongside the signatures of the director and three other administrators including the

chairman of the board Mr. Shihab Al Jabiri and the officer in charge of salary, Mr. Haider Al Zabin as well as the director at that time, Elias Rassier.

One day later, another form was produced for me. It was a correction to the form I signed the previous day, this time indicating I would lose not two, but three month's indemnity. That amounted to half the money I had accumulated during my time in Kuwait. At this, I got angry. Why are they doing this, I wondered? It felt like a kind of cheat. The school wished to punish me because I had the nerve to break contract. But, *who were they* to be annoyed with me? Had I not dedicated nine loyal years to them contributing both stability and talent? Further, why did I spend these recent years encouraged to believe I might get a vice principal position if the hidden agenda was to place bilingual teachers in the role regardless of their ability? And, now they want my money also? I wrote an email to the director. "Can you explain to me the requirement that I pay three month's indemnity as a result of my resignation?" I wrote. The reply came back by email relatively quickly that according to Kuwait law, I had broken contract and it was reasonable for the employer to recover costs associated with the loss incurred as a result of my broken contract. The phrase "according to Kuwait law" stuck in my mind and I thought if the appeal is to Kuwait law, let me inquire from an independent third party. I called up a legal firm specializing in settlements between Kuwait employers and expat employees. I explained the situation to an intelligent and likable man by the name of Victor Velascus. He spoke with a high and ornate command of the English language and conveyed a sense that all was well in hand. "Allow me to study the case and revert back to you" he said, stating that he would contact me within a few hours. "Please do not sign any more papers. The fact that they wish to have you sign indicates they need your agreement. If they need your agreement then there is some strength in your position." This was encouraging news indeed.

The next day I received a call from the legal firm and was told that my case was on the side of the law and that I had a legal standing not only to receive my full six and a half month's indemnity but that I would further be provided with costs not originally accounted in the calculation of the indemnity as the school proposed. The school was miscalculating my indemnity a further 5,000 American dollars in their favour, and this total should be added to the six and a half month's salary to which I was fully entitled. However, a case like mine had never been tried with regard to a school. Schools have unique circumstances of employment including the fact that summers were considered off time and there would be some question as to whether or not I was employed during those off months. This could affect the case as I should give my employer three months' notice. Never the less, I was encouraged to file the suit and the firm was happy to take the case. I was told however, that it could be as long as a year and a half or more for me to get my settlement and that meant that I would have no payout of any kind until that time. In fact, I would need to pay a portion of the legal costs up front. I would be leaving Kuwait with less money upon departure than I had planned.

"You know that cases such as these can last a long time" Haider the officer in charge of salary reminded me.

"Yes, I know. A year and a half."

"Oh, it can be much longer. As many as two or three years."

"I see. So, the school is not prepared to reconsider then?"

"No, I am afraid not. Mr. Shihab is really very disappointed in you. Of the six cases raised against the school this year, yours is the only one that hasn't been dropped. Of those, you are the only one Mr. Shihab knew personally."

"All right. I guess I will have to proceed with the suit. Thank you so much for your help."

“Not at all my friend.”

I remembered this conversation as I thought about the uncertainty of my employment in Korea. I knew the hearing at the experts’ department in Kuwait would happen in one week. This gave me some comfort at the time though the meeting at the experts’ department, it turned out, would be delayed multiple times because the lawyer for my former school repeatedly failed to appear in court.

Parker Palmer (1990) relates a Taoist poem by Chuang Tzu called *The woodcarver*. One of the lessons communicated in this poem is the woodcarver’s need to find inner freedom and the capability of producing work of excellence even in the midst of coercive circumstances. The wood carver had been told by the prince that he must make a bell stand, and in the end the woodcarver makes a bell stand of such quality that everyone who sees it is amazed, commenting that this bell stand must be the work of spirits. But when the wood carver describes the process by which he went ahead to design his product, he did it in circumstances that were not entirely favorable. One of his practices was to focus his attention away from the pressures and distractions of his circumstances and center down to his own inner truth. The wood carver resisted the “allures of material gain, higher status, immunity from criticism, and guaranteed praise, ... even resisted the temptation to toady to his all-powerful employer, the prince” (Palmer, 1990, p. 59). I suspect this is the same sort of detachment that Nancy Eggert describes as one element of the general sense of vulnerability that the contemplative leader is willing to embrace. In describing the leader’s sense of detachment, she like Palmer draws upon poetry, this time from Anthony de Mello, an Indian Jesuit priest, who wrote:

“I say to the things

that seem to constitute my very being:
my health,
my ideologies,
my good name, reputation,
and I must say it even to my life,
which must succumb some day to death,
“You are desirable and precious,
but you are not my life.
my life and destiny are separate from you”
(Eggert, 1998, p. 254).

These two stories came to me synchronically as if Bri arriving from the east and the west. There is a gathering of meaning here that I wish to pay attention to. Where am I able to apply this understanding in my circumstances right now? I think there is a general sense where I am always relying more on my own judgement than I am on the directives implied in a curriculum or given by my employer, the pressures of my bank balance or the time limits on my dissertation. These things are there, and they must be addressed but these pressures are not what produce the quality work or life which everyone in fact desires. These are all, frankly, distractions. What I need to focus on, like the wood carver, is the emergent situation and respond to it. The wood carver walked through the woods until he saw the tree with the bell stand already in it. This was a situation of apparently natural apprehension. The woodcarver “saw” the bell stand and then proceeded to release it from the tree. Likewise, I need to see the potential in my own situation and carve it out.

As I have been reading about poetic knowledge, and have come to a recurring theme which is that according to Aristotle the basis of action is leisure (Taylor, 1998). Interestingly this was an issue I wrestled with as a young person. I read books about work and leisure. I also had this inner sense that I needed to reject the drivenness that I felt all around me. I rebelled against it. I found I could do all kinds of things and endure plenty of hardship as long as I felt that in the end it did not matter, that it was frankly all play. One Saturday morning, while sitting on the couch my stepfather stomped down the stairs and pulled out the long hose for the central vacuum cleaner. “Good morning!” I said with cheer. My step father said nothing as he grunted and stomped his way around with the vacuum wand under chairs, across the carpet. “Move your ass!” he said as he approached me. I got up, put my shoes on and walked out the door to a nearby park where I found a patch of grass, lay down and watched the clouds pass by for a few hours. My feeling was why does the house need to be so spotless all the time? Is it so special to have a clean house full of unhappy people? Why ruin a perfectly good Saturday morning? I swore to myself that day that leisure, not work, was going to be fundamental. What I mean by this is that I refused to conform to any pressure to survive, whether it be social, economic, or otherwise. I felt instead that I should just trust life would provide my needs as long as I contributed back with my own best efforts. I was prepared to work, but I would work as a master, out of a sense of leisure not as a slave driven by fear of deprivation. To this day, I retain the unhurried feeling of a person who is not driven by any agenda. I do not avoid the cost of hard work but what I do, I do voluntarily and out of my free will. If I ever felt the gift I was offering was not appreciated or well respected, I would simply cease from offering my gift. I would quit. To do otherwise, is to become a part of the furniture. It is to become inanimate. I would be far more contented drinking out of empty peanut butter jars, than I would living as a house slave drinking out of wine glasses.

I had a dream. I seemed to be a student sitting at a desk and I had a contour map of the world. A female teacher came and bent down asking me to point on the map *when* I was born. I kind of retorted with a skeptical huff and replied “I guess you mean *where* I was born, as I cannot see anything on the map to indicate *when* I was born.” She spoke in very condescending high teacher tones and took the map and pointed here and there saying, “No, *when* were you born?”

I should give a word about dreams. I have been fascinated by dreams. Beginning with my Christian background where any casual reading of the Bible will soon reveal that turning points in the plot of the story often revolve around sacred encounters with God or angels, bearing good or ill will frequently accompanied by a sense of dreadful majesty, such that the dreamer awakens having felt he escaped a life or death encounter. Dreams have been very real for me, so real that as time passes I recall them as if they actually happened. And, for practical purposes, the outcomes of a conversation experienced in a dream, may very well be just as consequential as the outcomes of a real conversation. Autoethnographies have been described similarly from the standpoint that stories can bring about neurological outcomes (Adams, Jones & Ellis, 2013, p. 669). My dreams can be very entertaining. I have had dreams where I have woken up crying or laughing. Many times there is something peculiar or mystical about them. On one occasion, I awoke laughing believing I had just told a joke to my lover Shu-Shu sleeping beside me. Simultaneously, the sound of her quiet chuckle broke through my waking consciousness. With her back to me, curled together as we were, I whispered in her ear “Shu-shu, why did you laugh?”

“Hmmm?”, she whispered back as if she were already falling back into sleep, “Your funny story.”

There is something powerful about dreams. This is perhaps what appeals to me about Jung though I have never really followed my interest in dreams in any academic manner because my own natural engagement with dreams and symbols seems to be fruitful enough. I often refer to online dream dictionaries for help interpreting my dreams, but I do not treat these guides with undue reverence. There is much to be said for interpreting the mood and symbols one’s self. After all, that is what Jung did.

Perhaps fifteen years ago, I had a transformative experience in which my dreams played a significant role. I was walking, as was my custom, along the streets in my neighborhood of Nanaimo on Vancouver Island in British Columbia. At that time my living room window overlooked Departure Bay where the ferries arrive and depart every hour or so and float planes would, likewise, come and go throughout the day. It was near mid-December and in that part of Canada it would get dark around 3:30 pm, the sun setting behind the mountains before the astronomically correct sunset around 4:30. In those days one drove to work in the dark and came home in the dark. I had returned from work and was walking up and down the neighborhood streets for some fresh air to clear my mind of work related pressures. The streets, set in the hillside, were organized into nooks and crannies, often ending abruptly or curving around a corner only to merge with another street. The cedar trees were tall, their heavy branches swaying in the winter wind which blocked or unblocked the streetlamp creating a scene that gave me the feeling of the old black and white version of *To kill a mockingbird* (Pakula & Mulligan, 1962) at Hallowe’en.

I was nearing my home when I passed a street that went on up a hill where shadows moved along with the wind winding into greater depths of darkness further on up to my right. The thought entered my mind that I should go up the hill, followed immediately by another inner impulse of revulsion and fear. There are times in the winter when bears and cougars come down into the cities in pursuit of food and each year a story comes across the local news of some child or adult being attacked by one of these wild animals. Looking up that dark hillside road was like looking at the closet in my childhood bedroom in the deep dark night. I was entranced by the cross currents of revulsion and attraction. I didn't want to go up the street and I wanted to go up the street at the same time, but the fear aspect of me took over and I went home. For this private display of unseen cowardice, I felt inwardly chastised.

I came home, defeated by the empty neighborhood road. Numerous reproachful thoughts went through my mind as I recalled the words I once said to a colleague. He had asked me what I wanted in life. I thought for a few minutes then told him, "I guess I just want to have comfort." He looked steady at me and did not flinch. I respect that about him. I returned to my own self accusing thoughts and heard another voice, a deeper interior voice, coming from somewhere within me urging me to make an intentional plan to face the wild; it was time to get up and have a go at that infernal closet.

There was no voice exactly, but there was a definite impulsion which would not be inaccurate to describe as a *call*. I needed to confront the thing that shamed me and this fear of the wild that I needed to confront was embodied in my mind as fear of bears. In fact, it seemed to me that the *Bear* itself was making an appointment with me. I have had dreams of intimate encounters with a lover, after which I recall in most vivid awareness the scent of her body, the color of her hair. Upon waking, her physical, emotional and willing presence seems with me still,

despite there being no equivalent person in the waking world. It is a sense of presence much the same as one experiences when revisiting, alone, a favorite childhood haunt recalling the presence of companions long past. In like manner, I now anticipated with dread and wonder a similar encounter, but in this case with a presence more terrible. I could almost feel the warm dangerous breath of God, or fate, or nature challenging me, forward. A dark force was present with me now, helping me see that it was time to actively go out and meet my demise. I agreed to this call and with fear and trembling in my heart began that night making plans for a summer cycling trip.

British Columbia is in many places a province of rugged mountainous terrain. It was opened to traders from the East and the South by a series of railway passages across bridges, through tunnels and high up the side of ridges overlooking wild rivers laboriously picked through rock by rock when rail crews were foreign manual laborers. With modernity, many of these railroads no longer serve a useful purpose and the old rails are being reclaimed for their metal, leaving behind the well laid gravel of the rail bed. These rail beds are being converted into nature trails for use with motorcycles, ATVs and horses. Some sections are even paved over for bicycles ultimately resulting in the establishment of a Cross-Canada trail. I have always enjoyed roadside mountain biking and spent recent summers cycling along the roads of local islands, most notably the Gulf Islands between Victoria and Seattle. I purchased a book that listed several of the open trails remaining from the cleared out rail beds. I spoke with my first wife Darla about the possibility of completing a bicycle trip along a rail bed deep in the British Columbia interior. Without hesitation she suggested we invite some friends from church to go with us.

Several friends were interested. There was a young couple, Keith and Mary and their fifteen year old son Kevin and their twelve year old daughter Mercedes. There was also a brother and sister couple who shared a home together, Patricia and Gary. All of them were excited to

join the trip and we began to get our logistics in order. We would start in a town called Merritt, British Columbia planning to stay at a bed and breakfast on a local cattle ranch. In the morning we would set out from the center of Merritt and ride the rail bed northwest to Spence's Bridge, a roughly 70 km trip which we would divide into two day's cycling. Prior to this, we would park the truck with a flat bed bike trailer along the side of the highway where the cycling path met with the road. This would allow us to load up our bikes about half way through the trip, hop in the truck and return to the Bed and Breakfast for a second evening. On the following day we would again drop our bikes off at the previous day's end point, leave the truck forward at Spence's Bridge where it would be waiting as we completed the second leg of our journey.

Closer to the heart of the matter, I mounted a bear bell on my bicycle and also borrowed a mobile phone just in case we needed to call for help. I was very much convinced that we would meet a bear and I told all my travel companions that the purpose for the journey was to face a bear. This was not merely an intuition. There was a history. For years prior to and up till this time, I had bear dreams. They were nightmares in which bears chased me through the house. A bear would come in the front door and I ran up to the living room. The bear followed so I closed myself in a bedroom. The bear splintered the door into shards, and as he clambered through the torn doorway, I climbed out the window and onto the roof where naturally the bear would claw through the roof scraping himself to the surface, snorting, huffing and stretching out his claws. The dreams usually ended with me in some posture of retreat from the oncoming bear as I woke up in a sweat, desperate to escape. On a subsequent night, the bear dream would replay and it was as if my dream mind would say, here we go again and onward the anxious theme would proceed. The cycling trip was an expression of my desire to stop fleeing, break into the dream, and see what happens.

The trip to Merritt involved a two-hour ferry trip from Nanaimo to the Tsawwassen terminal on the main land followed by approximately six hours on the highway till we arrived at the ranch. Merritt is a small town marking the half way point through the Coquihalla highway to Kamloops. The Coquihalla highway rises high above the Cascade Mountains and follows the old Kettle Valley Railway, the trail we planned to take with our bikes. The topography is rocky, rough and dry with most grasses browning in the tin stove heat of the sun. As we approach Merritt, the highway descends for the first time from the height of the mountains and our cars coasted the last twenty minutes. There are several restaurant gas stops along a short strip of road and the town site beyond. We followed our small map and located the bed and breakfast that we reserved several months prior. The evening was spent chatting and playing cards.

It was a little hard the next day finding the exact starting point as the rail bed had been paved over in several sections and its former path was barely visible in the center of town. Planners appeared to handle the bed as an inconvenience to be removed as it curved through the development of other properties and roadways. We followed it along as best we could, but sometimes the rail bed just disappeared and we had to anticipate approximately where it was likely to appear again. The morning air was slightly cool but the summer sun was already invading spaces reserved for shadows. In a short time, we made our way out of the town where the trail became predictable and began to pass by several farm fields on our left and the Spence's Bridge highway on our right. Kevin frequently raced ahead on the trail and his father followed. Mercedes and her mother remained close to Patricia and Gary while chatting about events at church, and a volleyball tournament Patricia had just attended. I and Darla remained fairly close to each other and kept a pace between Kevin and Keith ahead of us and Mercedes, Mary, Patricia and Gary behind us.

Stopping for a drink from our water bottles, Mary noted concern on my face. “Are you still worried about the bear?” she asked. Before I could reply, Patricia said “Oh, Gary and I grew up in this area and we wanted to see bears but the only one I ever saw was way off in the valley. I really hope I get to see one this trip” she said, eyes sparkling.

My wife added “My colleagues tell me that bears are more afraid of you than you are of them.” I listened to all these comments with acceptance, but inwardly I knew that I had a destiny to fulfill. “Let’s just see,” I said.

We continued our trek. I had travelled on loosely packed gravel roads before in which the bicycle’s wheels sink slightly requiring that you push the pedals harder. Loose gravel also causes a slippage requiring that you counter balance your steering frequently in order to keep in the direction you wish to go. Such gravel is tiresome to cycle and thankfully the old rail bed was not that kind of gravel. It was packed firmly allowing our wheels to glide freely along the surface. Very little oil or debris had dispersed over this gravel and it made me wonder how fresh the trail was since there was also a frequency of old rusty railroad spikes scattered about the entire trail.

Having passed out of the city we crossed west over some fields and proceeded to the other side of the valley where there was nothing to our left except forest and to our right, the tall waving wheat field. This section, now far removed from the highway on the eastern side of the field, seemed sheltered from the noise of society, the bedroom of the world, with only a gentle breeze which was getting steadily warmer. We watched a fox who did not seem too bothered as he scampered past our curious attention, his head bobbing up and down as he searched for something in the grass. Eager as a puppy, and just as playful as he jumped after his darting prey.

We came at last to a place we anticipated would be our stopping point for lunch. There was a covered trestle bridge crossing the river that smelled of pitch with a rope hanging from it.

Kevin whose hair was shaved close to the sides of his head and otherwise grown long down his back looked like a young white skinned wilding as he whooped and hollered swinging off the rope into the river. He drifted downstream as he made his way to the shore and clambered back to the bridge, his shorts dripping profusely and shirt stuck to lean wiry body. He repeated his whooping jump many times over. Occasionally, he would say half out loud how awesome this whole trip was claiming his friends would be jealous. He couldn't believe his parents were doing this. Mercedes watched her brother with pride but she was also social and needed to get in the middle of the picnic that was set up down below. Everyone but Kevin and I sat down to lunch by the river bank and chatted. "Isn't it gorgeous today?" Someone's voice carried up the hill to my hearing.

"Yeah its amazing how far we've come in such a short time" I heard Darla say, voice barely discernable above the rushing water and Kevin's splashes.

"The whole area seems pretty developed" Mary said. I thought about the fences, ditches and even now during our lunch stop the farmer's field where there is some road construction about five minutes back though all the machinery was shut down on the weekend.

Darla brought a sandwich up to me. "Do you want to come down and eat with everyone?" she asked. I was at the foot of the bridge peering ahead into the future along the path we had yet to travel. Between the bright twinkle of the creek and the darkness of the bridge ahead, I could hardly make out Darla's features.

"No thanks," I replied, "but you go ahead and visit. Don't worry about me."

Darla slid back down the embankment to where everyone was eating lunch and their quiet chatter floated among the breezes. They looked up at me to smile and wave from time to time but as I gazed at a bee hanging heavily in the air, the entire scene viewed through my now

sweating brow transformed to a reverie of sparkling light, flowers weaving and bobbing in the breeze, the view diminishing ahead. I wondered what was waiting for us as I stared into the tunnel not too far distant. My companions, knowing now very clearly that I was expecting to see a bear did not understand the spiritual implications of this trip for me nor did they think we would actually encounter a bear. They saw how preoccupied I was but made no sign other than respect for the fact that I had inspired this trip they were now enjoying. For me, this trip was a showdown. Whatever that Bear was, it had chased me in my dreams and caused me to veer away from paths that I would otherwise have taken. It was time to meet that Bear face to face. The Bear itself was demanding this of me and the time was nearing.

After a good hour of refreshment for the others, and pacing for me, we once again began our journey. We crossed the trestle and immediately noticed how much closer the path had grown, trees more intimate, less light and cooler. While most of the journey the river had been to our left and the highway to our right, crossing the river now put the mountain side rising on our left and the river below us to our right. All that could be heard was birdsong and rushing water while the sweet smell of cedar, and evergreens, reminded one of honey. Kevin and Keith picked up the pace and were soon far ahead of us. We no longer saw nor heard them, and the others were so far behind us that Darla and I felt quite alone deeply buried in wilderness now, far from anything familiar. We started singing and I rang my bear bell as we began to round several blind and rocky corners. Along the way, a field opened up to a bit of a clearing. Darla asked “Can we stop a minute?”

We both got off our bikes and straddled the cross bars, looking at each other. “I think I am having my period” she said.

“What? You’re kidding!” All I could think about was how dangerous it was for a female to be menstruating while in bear country. I had read stories to my wife about the increased likelihood of bear attacks when someone in the group was menstruating. “Did you know this was your cycle? Why didn’t you say something about it in the morning?”

I am sure Darla recalled the risks. “I didn’t think it would start today and I didn’t bring any tampons.”

“What!?” I again replied. My nervousness intensified. “Let’s not stop here now. I think we have almost reached the truck.”

“Oh,... Ok” she said with some discomfort and hesitation.

“Where is everyone?” she asked.

“I think Kevin and Keith have probably already reached the truck, but I have no idea about Mary and the others.”

“Do you think we should wait for them?”

“No, I really think we should keep moving especially now. I don’t think staying in one spot is advisable.”

We did not get much further before we caught up with Keith and his son Kevin.

“Man you guys are slow” Kevin chided.

“Where are Mary and the others?” Keith asked.

“We haven’t seen them for probably forty minutes” Darla said, “Do you think we should wait?”

“Nah,” said Keith, “Let’s just go slow.” We joined Keith and Kevin and it was only a few minutes later when Keith got off his bike stopping suddenly. Peering forward, then straightening

with his body rigid, he turned his head downward and toward us saying in very calm and level tones, “Bear.”

Barely had he uttered the words when from directly ahead a large brown bear appeared and raced toward us, head down, making “woofing” sounds while wagging his lowered head. He came at a speed that made running away an absurdity. In the panic of the moment, I noticed how we did not even have time to turn our bikes around. All we could do was stare and meet the fate ahead of us. The bear came almost within touching distance, perhaps a car length away or less, and then suddenly veered left through the trees and up the mountain.

“Shit!” I heard Darla utter while she heard me saying matter-of-factly, “I knew it!”

The bear had gone, but where? To our left was a mountain side which the bear had just climbed. I stared at the tree branches still swaying from its passage. Was he going to jump back down on us? Was he going further down the path toward Mary, Mercedes and the others? Months later I came across a book somewhere that said that bears, when frightened, will do one of three things if they charge a human. Either they will charge the human and then abruptly stop at smelling distance in order to assess the situation and then decide what to do, or they will just charge and complete the charge with a mauling which can end in numerous unsatisfactory ways or they will charge the human as a kind of fake attack, and at the last second veer away.

Fortunately for us, the charge was merely a ploy to frighten us, very successfully.

“I think the truck is just around the next bend” said Keith to me as he peered further ahead on the path. “You, Darla and Kevin should find the truck and load up your bikes and wait along the road. I’ll go back and make sure the others are OK.”

We agreed, and it turned out that the truck *was* around the next bend though we had to carry our bikes across some rough terrain from the path to the road. The remaining group never

heard or saw any bear and quite simply enjoyed a leisurely and conversational ride wishing that they had been part of the drama.

Since we had only completed the first of a two day's journey the celebratory cigars I broke out were a bit early, but they seemed very appropriate for our first evening's campfire stories. We, along with the owners of the bed and breakfast exchanged bear stories we had heard, and we recited once again the story of our own encounter.

"All I can say" Darla offered, "Is I feel betrayed. All my life people have been telling me how cute bears are and that humans have nothing to fear from them. I was never really afraid to go into the woods before, but now I don't know what to believe."

"You just have to be careful" Patricia offered. "Like I said before, I have spent my whole life in these hills and never ran into a bear before. I still haven't even though I wish I had. But most people just use their common sense."

"Well, at least Kelly can rest now that his appointment has been fulfilled is that right?" Mary asked, crinkling her nose at me.

I thought for a moment and then replied "Yes, strangely, even though Darla started out unafraid but wound up afraid I think the opposite has happened to me. I began afraid, but now since the charging of the bear, I am less afraid. I am not sure why that is. Perhaps because it turned out not quite so bad as I expected." Around that evening campfire, I didn't get too philosophical because I knew this would bore the present crowd of beer drinking, cigar smoking, tall tale telling crowd, but I could not help reflecting on the fact that there was a certain satisfaction in having faced down this elemental danger, something, I suppose the cave paintings in Lascaux France are suggestive of. I placed my entire self at risk knowing that there was a danger ahead and in the process enjoyed a very beautiful and energizing experience in the

wilderness with friends and family. I felt alive, appreciative and in the end somewhat transformed in my own outlook. Since that trip, and during the years that followed the bear dreams have come to a complete end.

The bear encounter, while significant was not the only time I went on a cycling journey. The west coast of British Columbia has many terrific places for a journey and Darla and I took as many opportunities as we could. During those trips I collected a variety of keepsakes; found objects that I retained because of the way they represented some memorable aspect of the cycling adventure. After the bear trip, I decided to put these keepsakes together with the spike I saved from the trail. Over the years this collection has become, inadvertently, a sort of shrine as seen below. The metal stand I got at Starbucks in Nanaimo, and the cloth/leather/bead placemat from



Dillard's in the United States. The card was given to me from my first wife Darla. The rusty metal spike, was one among many scattered about the rail bed between Merritt and Spence's Bridge in British Columbia. The spike, just to give some perspective is very

solid iron. It is quite heavy to hold and easily covers the span of my open palm. There are other unique items in the collection. There is a pyramid shaped rock which came from a shore line that was littered with them, large and small – somewhere in the Gulf Islands. I picked one



that I felt would not weigh me down too much for the remainder of my trip. Under the spike is another rock, this one in the shape of a small loaf of bread. It is very smooth, like a worry stone but much larger. There is something very comforting about holding it, and I suspect by its weight and specks of rust color that it, like the spike, contains iron. Next to all the elemental objects, are some that are more organic, a gnarly piece of driftwood, a dried up pear picked from a tree growing off a grassy clump overlooking a beach and finally on the furthest left is a sea heart. Sea hearts are seeds from very large legumes that grow in tropical destinations. They have pockets of air inside them and if they find their way into the ocean current can travel great distances. Having one means sharing the luck of the sea heart which is capable of travelling long distances and enduring the difficulties that are bound to occur on such a great voyage. Hanging off the pyramid and down from the display is a beaded cross on a leather string. The cross was given to me at a weekend retreat called Cursillo, a short course in Christianity. On the back of the cross are the words “Christ is counting on you” to which I replied “...and I on him,” as is customary when the cross is placed over your head at the end of a Cursillo weekend.

Robertson Davies (1972) places great thematic weight on the symbolism of the bear in his novel *The Manticore*. The main character of the story David Staunton comes to the end of an effective session of psychoanalysis only to fall short of the transformation required to become a real hero in his own story. A friend of his named Leisl, seeing the lack of transformation in her friend, takes Davie into a cherished cave, known only to her, where ancient bear worshipers practiced their dark rituals. The trip to the cave was replete with steep narrow tunnels, bear bones and pine-torch lamps. His friend Liesl, hoped to inspire a sense of awe in Davie’s life, shake him into awareness of our shared human existence, feel his companionship with those who have gone

before in the face of “the great mysteries” and “the facts of death, mortality and continuance” (p. 274). Liesl claimed they “sacrificed and ate of the noblest thing they could conceive, hoping to share in its virtue” (p. 274). Davie was fairly unresponsive, choosing rather to intellectualize everything. Davie found the cave experience to be claustrophobic and complained for lack of light, asking that *for the love of God* they should return to the surface. Leisl, seeing her opportunity said “Is not God to be found in the darkness?” (p. 274). Never the less, she acquiesced. They doused the pine torches only to find that the electric torch they carried with them would no longer function. They had to feel their way around in order to find the entrance to the return tunnel, and make the journey back in the pitch black, crawling often on their stomachs. A sudden wind passed through the cave chambers. Davie, thinking the sound to be a bear, believed he was about to face death and wound up soiling himself to his shame, stuck in a tunnel that seemed to have no end, with Leisl behind him. Davie complained he could not go on at which point Leisl challenged him “What gives you strength? Have you no God?” (p. 276). Davey found strength as he looked within and recalled a courageous relative, long forgotten, and the story leads to its dénouement resulting in the first dawning of Davie’s transformation.

I have been fascinated with this story since I read it. The idea of seeking empowerment through identification with a great spirit is not foreign to me at all, and after my experience in the forest so many years ago, I have come to believe that the bear is my own personal guide, mentor and guardian. William Koenig wrote a dissertation entitled *Leadership for the whole in the mythic field of C.G. Jung’s unconscious processes* (2010). He speaks of moving away from concepts of causation in leadership to a concept of conditions that lead cumulatively to emergence of new conditions organically connected to the previous ones. In order to lead well, one needs to identify what is emerging as a result of the complex conditions within an

organization. This happens on individual as well as corporate levels. On the individual level, we cannot avoid the relatedness of our own subconscious to the multiple internal influences guiding our own decisions and on the organizational level we cannot avoid the relatedness of the mythologies that exist within the organization, and ourselves, as part of the conditions that influence emergence. Koenig (2010) advocates several practices that help a leader engage his own active imagination so as to bring one's unconscious to awareness and thus make deliberate connections between one's unconscious and conscious self, corresponding to Jung's concept of the transcendent function leading to the individuation that brings peace to our inner conflicts. One of the practices Koenig (2010) advises for developing one's active imagination is the practice of engaging an ally, or one's "genius" (Koenig, 2010, p. 123) – a kind of partner that communicates to us by word or image. Koenig states "felt experience is real experience" (Koenig, 2010, p. 356) and to acquire this real experience one must learn to both feel and communicate deeply with this partner.

I quite agree with Koenig's suggestion, and had already found the spiritual unity through the engagement of an ally, unawares. It began in my dream life, the consequent cycling trip and encounter with the bear and as already demonstrated with the gathering of artifacts that over time became a sort of shrine. Also, during a poetry workshop I attended in the summer of 1997 conducted by Luci Shaw I wrote the following poem, which despite its singsong nature, has functioned as a kind of description of my relationship with my ally.

Shaking my Dread

A moonlit night within the woods,
where shadows trick the eyes, branches move
And wave about, when much to my surprise
I think I see a creature there.

In panic fast I think to run but curiosity quells fear,

And as I gaze more deeply in, I find a longing near.
The shape is vague, the form unclear;
A wonder comes to mind, could it be
Inside of me there lives a bear?
A bear that's free to roam, to plod along, amidst the tang of piney air;
who smells of blood and musk, has honey in his grizzled hair?

Though ponderous, they live their lives in light and fearless tread.
I long to shake my dread, reach high and make my mark within the bark of border wood,
raise up my head and loose a roar that makes the rock face shudder.

And when the sound comes back around, and moonlight shines above, I'll settle down
beneath the bluff, and with a snorty huff, I'll close my eyes and realize
the pleasures of a bear.

The cumulative effect of all of this is that on various occasions great and small, I have called upon my relationship with this strong spirit both internally as somehow representative of myself, but also representative of something outside of me which, in times of need I must reach out to. I have often stopped before this shrine of mine and have found a kind of comfort that perhaps only visual learners understand. It is an aesthetic thing. If I were to characterize this emotional exchange the best way I can describe it is on a level less dramatic, but very compelling. During my years in Kuwait I often watched episodes of *So you think you can dance?* I know nothing about dance, and find the show interesting because it functions as a kind of primer for the uninitiated. What astounded me, over and over again was how often I would watch a dance routine and find myself with little creeks of salty tears staining my face and dripping from my chin. I was so moved and stunned by what I saw that I often called someone or sent an email just to convey how much I was affected. I know I am not alone in such experiences. In like manner, when I look at my shrine, there is a kind of wordless exchange that takes place in which I am moved, not so much by beauty but strength, power and a feeling of being rooted in nature

itself. Usually aesthetic communication is subtle however there was one occasion that stood out to which I referred at the beginning of this chapter in which I felt I was about to lose it all.

I left a job in Kuwait that had given me a stable and comfortable income for nearly ten years, but as events turned out during my departure I sued my former employer and would not know the outcome for several years. Needless to say, I could not return to them as many former employees had, should things not work out for me in Korea. During the summer, as a celebration of new beginnings my family and I travelled together for the first time to Canada. Then when I arrived in Korea my Criminal Record check, as noted earlier this chapter, had not yet been processed so I began work without a proper visa and also no salary. I had moved all my earthly goods from Kuwait to Korea (I have at least 350 books, plenty of art, and several other household items), was spending my savings supporting myself as I worked without a salary, and daily wondered why the necessary documentation was not arriving as expected.

The day came when SH approached me to say that if, by the end of the month, I did not have the proper paperwork, I would not be welcome to return to work. Shortly after, I decided that the only route remaining for me was that I had to re-establish residency in Canada and apply for my CRC there. The owners graciously accepted my plan and as I drained the final dollars from my account I booked the flight. However, I had to face the fact that I was returning to Canada with an empty bank account, without any of my personal belongings, my wife and son still in Thailand with a house payment due monthly and an angry former employer who was surely not going to provide a job reference for me.

While packing my suitcase the thought was not far from my mind that perhaps I would not return. Perhaps my job would no longer be available to me, or something would continue to upset the visa process. I thought perhaps I was facing my own demise. Heading for the apartment

door, I felt utterly alone and afraid. I looked at my shrine. Like Davie stuck in a dark underground tunnel, I too felt pressed by my circumstances and the only way out was to crawl through the darkness. But, the difference was, I had met this bear before. I stood, staring at my shrine. An exchange took place. I felt the infilling strength of the bear. The stone pyramid so much like a mountain gave me a sense of grandeur firmly rooted within. Somehow, just as beauty from dance filled me with emotion, so also as I gazed on these material symbols, I found myself filled with a power to counteract the fear that so haunted me. With this image, and this mood, I walked out of the apartment on legs solidly planted on the ground. I returned to Canada, got a new driver's license the day I arrived, re-established my residency, applied for the criminal record check, went to the Korean embassy in Vancouver, completed all the necessary paper work and came back to Korea where I was finally able to work as a teacher legally and receive my salary.

Sadly, it was several months into the year now and no longer suitable for my wife and son to move to Korea. We decided to hold off for another year. Wife and son online. Me, in Korea, working it out.

Once my legal status was settled, the remainder of the year passed by relatively simply, apart from the fact that I was now teaching much more than I had been at my previous school. I had forgotten how intense the public school model was for teachers. When I had a class at my previous school it was forbidden to be recording marks, planning lessons or grading assignments when there were students in class. My sole focus was to be upon the students at all times. Now, at my current school, I have to do plenty of administrative tasks while my class is underway. I do grading, enter grades, plan for the next day's lessons, prepare class supplies etc. Prep time is

simply not enough to prepare adequately. Not only that, but instead of planning for a single class taught four times daily as I did at my previous school, I now had to plan a completely original schedule for every block of every day through the week. There were no repeats. I was told when I got hired that this teaching position would only be for a year and thus it was that before the year was out, I was identified as the incoming principal. My first act as principal took place before I left for summer holidays.

I was approached by SH on a Thursday late in June asking me if I could come to the school Saturday morning where I would meet with him and JJ to speak with Irene from the BC Ministry in order to change the name of the school ownership from CFS to the VCA Schooling Collaborative.

“Yes, sure” I said. “Why Saturday?”

“It is Friday afternoon in BC and that was the best time to book the phone call.”

It was to be my first act as the new principal and the first time I drove the company van to work. There was definitely something empowering, but also slightly sneaky feeling about this meeting. It seemed strange to me to be meeting on Saturday. The appointment was scheduled for 11:00 but I was there at 10:00 starting to move some personal items into the office that had belonged to Darlene. JJ and SH arrived about 15 minutes early whereby JJ showed me a signed document indicating all the board members’ approval of the name change which was to be reported to Irene. It was written in Korean, and appeared to be legal and formal. JJ explained that we needed to change the company name in order to reconstitute our school under a different government jurisdiction thus removing it from the scrutiny of the local ministry of education. By categorizing ourselves as a collaborative, rather than a Hagwan we are under the oversight of a different government ministry.

“How do you know this oversight is acceptable for schools?” Irene asked him over the phone conference speaker.

“I have an article right here, which can be found on the internet. They even *recommend* that schools form under this legislation” JJ reached across the desk showing me the article and pointing with his finger the underlined section. Again, it was in Korean.

Throughout his conversation with Irene, I noticed JJ looking to me. It was as if to say “am I speaking English correctly?” I nodded to him throughout the conversation.

“And, according to what you said to me the ownership will remain the same but the provider is the only thing that changes?” Irene asked.

“Yes, yes the owners do not change. I have the document on the change of company name here. All the owners have signed it.” JJ pointed to the document with all the names on it and made sure I saw what he was referring to.

“Thank you” Irene said. “Let me speak to Kelly for a moment.”

“Hello Irene, I am here” I said. “You are on conference mode. We can all hear you.”

“That’s fine Kelly. So, you have viewed the documents that Mr. Jang has?”

“Yes.”

“And is it true what Mr. Jang is saying? The owners have signed the change of name legally?”

“Well there is a document here, in Korean and it appears to have a number of signatures on it.”

“OK, and does it seem legitimate to you?”

“Yes, it appears so.”

“OK, if that is the case, we will go ahead and change the operator name to VCA Schooling cooperative then. Mr. Jang are you still there? Is there anything else that needs attention at this time?”

“No that is the only business. I just wish to ask that you do not share this with the other schools. This is an ownership strategy and we do not wish to make it known to the other owners.”

“Yes, that is fine” Irene replied. “OK, if there is nothing else we can call this meeting finished. Thank you.”

“Yes, thank you” JJ offered.

“Good bye” I said. The phone on the BC end clicked. In all, the phone call took perhaps five, maybe ten minutes.

I looked at JJ and said “It’s done.”

“Yeah” he said with raised eyebrows. He got up and as he turned I saw that the back of shirt had become nearly completely soaked in sweat.

Chapter 5 – No illusions

Saturday morning, I saw on *CNN Today* that Donald Trump used pseudonyms to portray himself as his own marketing representative. During a discussion section, one of the speakers argued that it was habitual for Donald Trump to misrepresent himself this way as it allowed him to say things while avoiding responsibility for saying them and that this pattern continues to the present time. Examples of his recent behaviors are found in the manner by which Donald Trump cites conspiracies as if they are fact, such as Ted Cruz's father being associated with Lee Harvey Oswald, and then if the story sticks Trump gains an advantage, if on the other hand Trump is challenged he can claim that he never said it rather, the *National Inquirer* did. So, it is his way of creating lies, or borrowing lies and then not being required to take responsibility for them.

I walked into the bedroom where my wife was. "The media got him!" I told my wife Phunee as she was putting on her make up. "That's it. That's Donald Trump. He's a sales man; he is a con artist." Now a person can be a salesman and not be a con artist. I am not conflating the two, but with Donald Trump, I am. My instinct tells me that he is a con artist and that what he does is not for the betterment of anyone but himself and the last biggest property Donald Trump wants to buy is the mind of the American people and consequently many people around the world as well because America is so interlinked in the global economy.

Phunee agreed with me, but then she challenged me. "My dissertation director was that way. She would say one thing to me directly and another thing when she was in the committee, the complete opposite. She found it easy to lie."

I thought a moment and attempted to diminish the seriousness of my wife's claims as they seemed to soften my charge against Trump. "Well, that could be intentional or she is just

getting old. Maybe she can't remember what she said. Or perhaps there were different contexts leading to different statements" I proffered.

"No, she did it on purpose, I'm sure." Phunee paused as she checked herself in the light. "That's the way the world is. You have to be able to live with it." Sometimes I think my wife likes Donald Trump, truth be told. Phunee very much supports the military's takeover of the Thai government in a coup recently and General Prayut, the self-acclaimed prime minister is known to be a straight talker who doesn't take lip from anyone. She often chuckles as she watches him on TV.

"Well, yes... that is the way the world is, and we do have to learn to live with it, just the way we have to learn to live with natural disasters, toxins in the environment, predators... all these kinds of things. I mean, this is the world." I love Annie Dillard's book, *Pilgrim at Tinker Creek* which I found in a larger compilation called *Three by Annie Dillard* (1990). *Tinker Creek* explores numerous natural processes that have parallels to social life such as the pervasiveness of parasitism – "I am a frayed and nibbled survivor" (Dillard, 1990, p. 232) and the natural world's incessant urge to wasteful over-production - "the landscape of the earth is dotted and smeared with masses of apparently identical individual animals... as teeming and cluttered as any human Calcutta..." (Dillard, 1990, p. 162), as a metaphor of limited resource, competition and global mass production of goods. Through the lens of natural processes, one is able to observe society, and find that it is still red in tooth and claw – "the universe that suckled us is a monster and does not care if we live or die" (Dillard, 1990, p. 172). And, where we once feared the unpredictability of nature, its dark woods and its creeping things moderns have not really subdued nature so much as transformed it. We now turn our attention to the dangers of humanity itself and the systems we have erected. Modern institutions can be chaotic. Nature can with little warning,

quite effectively brutalize us, and the same can be said of the processes of the civilized world and we need to accept this. This is the way the world is, and our acceptance of the basic conditions are a necessary precondition to increase our life chances. On this I agree with my wife. However, Dillard (1990) also rightly points out that humans do not follow blind instinct. We bring human values to the world. We humanize our environments.

“Yes,” I agreed with Phunee. “We accept the conditions, but we also work against them for the benefit of something higher than nature. When I start thinking in terms of the communities to which we bring human values, then no, I cannot accept lying, I cannot tolerate it. The problem with Donald Trump is that he prefers lies. He is a lying liar, a person who purposely uses a method of operational deceit in order to achieve his own megalomaniac desires. I don’t see him as somebody trying to achieve a social good. When he says make America great again, all I hear is an angry little boy looking at someone else’s toy shouting “That’s mine!”

I think my wife felt a bit threatened by my thoughts because Thai culture accepts that lying is quite acceptable, not just Thai culture but Korean as well (Kohls, 2001). After a pause, I began again. “So, you mean one just needs to accept people like your professor exist and you do not need to do anything about it?”

“Yes.”

“I don’t think so. I think sometimes we have to demonstrate rage.”

Then she replied “In Asian culture we believe you have to show respect.”

“Yes,” I replied. “Something I really appreciate, not just about Thai culture, but about Korean culture is the idea of saving face and respecting the dignity of people. You do not purposely act out your rage against someone when you know that they are lying. You value the person more than their behavior or their acting out. I really do admire the Asian desire to respect

the individual and I try to learn from it. It is probably one of the reasons why I have been so attracted to Asia because I don't feel this kind of respectfulness when I am in North America. Despite the western rhetoric, I do not *feel* the respect of the individual. Kuwait also, seems better than Canada or the US in this respect."

My wife was listening as she continued to apply her ointments and makeup.

"But such respect has to be two ways. It cannot just be a respect for the other which results in the suppression of my own needs and desires. So your professor nearly killed your career with the almighty God power that she had. She needed to be spoken to by someone."

My wife said, "She'll never listen. It's the Asian culture. She will just say it is the terrible student."

"I don't agree Phunee," I said, sitting down on the bed beside her. "If a student spoke to you, even if you didn't accept what the student was saying, you will still think about it later I am sure."

"Yes," Phunee agreed after a pause.

"Right," I said. "You would think about it later, and it would affect you and you would possibly change. So, it is small steps, small steps maybe that are required. But the idea is, if we are going to have a social good, we have to tell the truth. We can't be liars."

And then my wife said, "But Mitsubishi has been lying for fifteen years, and what about the German automakers who have been lying, and Nissan? The whole industry is lying and cheating about fuel emissions. This is the way the world is. Politicians lie, they always lie."

"OK," I said. "There is another side to this. There is another side to lying that has to be recognized. Never mind business and industry for a moment and just focus on leaders who take on political roles. There is a story in the Bible, Exodus, where Pharaoh is getting threatened by

the many births of the Israelites whom they have enslaved and the problem is that there was getting to be too many Israelites. So Pharaoh told the Egyptian midwives to kill the male Israelite babies as soon as they were born. But the midwives, honored God and did not kill the babies and then lied to Pharaoh saying that the Israeli women are strong and vigorous and give birth before the midwives arrive. And the story says that God blessed the midwives. So there is a religious sanction here on lying. It is seen as a good thing.

Sometimes people have to have political savvy and recognize the effect of their words or actions. There are times where open deceit is called for, and I think there is a progression of small deceits that can be equally argued. The lying is good when it counteracts an even greater evil. Ultimately, what is the motive of the liar? Is the liar, a lying liar who combines that lying with megalomaniac ambitions or is the liar, one who selectively chooses lies for the advancement of the general good of everyone or the prevention of evils much worse than lying? As leaders, we have to answer these questions because sometimes the most damaging thing you can do is tell the truth. The flip side of this is that we also need to know when we are being conned; when are we being preyed upon. The recognition of good and bad lies, and their use are necessary tools of leadership. Such skills help us humanize an otherwise brutal world. Yet, at the same time, and paradoxically, we cannot become cynical and lose contact with a basic and elemental sincerity in dealing with people as we would expect others to deal with us.

“How can you argue against Donald Trump, he has so much success?” my wife asked.

“Success? What success? All he does is draw money to himself at the expense of others. There can be no success until there is success for all. No peace, no justice. Why not view him rather as the epitome of failure?”

I first met Kyle when I started as a Vice Principal at VCA. It was during orientation week, prior to the beginning of classes. One morning, a few of us were introduced. “Hi, I am Giorgio” my colleague began as Kyle went around shaking hands.

This was followed by “Roger”... “Good to meet you Roger.”

“I’m Kelly” I said.

“Oh! Handsome!”

I’d like to say such a statement had no impact on me, but the fact is I warmed up to Kyle right away. I became very curious about him and wondered who he was. As I was perusing some promotional material Kyle approached me from behind, looked over my shoulder and began explaining how the brochure was put together. I said to him that I was thinking of using VCA as an acronym for something like V – Visionary, C – Community Oriented, A – Authentic.

Kyle smiled and looked around proclaiming, “I can work with this guy!” He gave me several winks and nods and at a certain private moment he said to me “You will be principal next year, right?” I told him that I was reading the offshore manual put out by the British Columbia ministry and found that I needed to have 3 year’s experience as Vice Principal (a misreading of the document I realized later) so I didn’t think I could be principal next year. “But you would like the position, right?” he asked.

“Yes, sure I would.”

“No worries” he replied as he turned to speak with Constance, the woman who worked the front desk. I began to wonder if it was in the principal’s plan to be departing at the end of the current year as I was told during my job interview with Becky Deng.

The office staff, teachers, principal and another man by the name of Jack together went out to lunch that same day. Kyle placed himself in front of me and as we picked up on our previous conversation I asked him “Who started this school?” Kyle pointed the finger toward his own chest and said “I did.”

“No he didn’t!” claimed Darlene when I later had a chance to share with her my thoughts about Kyle. “You have to watch out for him” she told me. “He, hmmm... does not always speak out of the same side of his mouth, if you know what I mean. I don’t mean to say anything negative about him, he is a brother in the Lord but he sometimes says things that make you go hmmm.” It turns out that he often said things that made Darlene go hmmm. Also grrrrh! And perhaps, “God love him but isn’t he an idiot?”

Over the course of the year I did not work with Kyle so closely, but I heard about him from Darlene on a regular basis. I am not sure it was ever positive and I often agreed that he seemed somewhat incompetent and perhaps deceitful. Yet, I wondered if I was being biased by Darlene who ran interference between him and I. It seemed that any time I ever had a chance to talk with Kyle, Darlene would appear and I was unable to speak freely so it was difficult to ascertain directly whether or not Darlene portrayed him fairly – I think she did. Certainly, from a distance, I would observe that he was doing things that seemed to be contradictory to the purpose of our school. He established a program called College and Career Preparation or CCP. This was a locally produced program that ostensibly prepared students for entrance into college. Teachers in this program were locally hired and were not certified, as the regular teachers were, by the province of British Columbia. The CCP teachers promoted American Universities, taught intensive English using work books, were supposedly in place to help students make college selections and prepared to support students once they went overseas.

“Why do we have this program?” I once asked Darlene.

“Odd isn’t it?” She replied. “We should have a certified teacher doing ESL, not these workbooks! Can you imagine all the time these students spend filling in blanks in work books?”

“Not only that” I replied. “Doesn’t the BC Curriculum cover the matters they are supposedly addressing? I mean, isn’t it the job of BC teachers to prepare students for post secondary institutions? Even more, isn’t the purpose of British Columbia Schools so that we can attract students to British Columbia?”

“Yes, we have a course called Planning 10” she replied “which will start when students enter grade 10.”

“Right,” I said. “So why waste the time and talent? So many hours wasted. We should just get rid of CCP and hire an ELL expert. What these students really need is to improve their English speaking skills.”

“That’s what I keep telling Kyle, but he doesn’t listen. He says this is what parents want.”

For me, though frustrating, CCP was simply a contradiction that would work itself out. It would soon become obvious as High School proceeded that the BC curriculum has its own agenda for preparing students and everyone would wonder, a. Why are we teaching this material twice? and b. if conflicts between the two sets of courses arose as they inevitably would, who is right? Naturally, if our certification, which allowed us to exist as a school is based in BC, then the BC curriculum will obviously win out in the end.

It was never really said to me directly, but I could tell that my placement as vice principal that year was not Darlene’s decision. The person who originally interviewed me was a woman by the name of Becky Deng who was employed by a company in Vancouver that was hired by our

school to recruit and otherwise manage matters where expertise and contacts local to British Columbia might be required. She seemed very enthusiastic and lead me to believe that I was a perfect fit for the job and that I could start as vice principal, with principal work in the following year as the current principal was not planning to return. Later Darlene, the current principal, interviewed me and I got the job offer but it was for the position of teacher only. I refused the offer of teacher and wished them the very best as they continued their search, but received a follow-up offer a few days later for the position of teaching vice principal. I suspected that Darlene was not too enthusiastic about me being vice principal and this was confirmed when later, during teacher orientation week, Darlene introduced herself to my colleagues as the *principal* and myself as *another teacher*. I started identifying myself as the *vice principal* however and over time the idea seemed to settle in and Darlene began to confide in me.

Over the months, it became apparent that Darlene was having real struggles with Kyle. She would often pull me into the office and with a conspiratorial whisper say “Close the door.” She would tell me about a meeting that the owners were having in the room next door to her office where she could hear everything. Sometimes the issue was money. Sometimes they would be planning class schedules and she would ask me who is the principal of this school? I wondered aloud what role Kyle played exactly. Darlene could not answer that question. She said they originally functioned as a partnership, him representing the Korean side and her representing the Canadian side. But since a falling out she had with him toward the end of the previous year, Kyle had taken to avoiding her. She told me how Kyle nearly destroyed the school the previous year with his mishandling of the parent advisory committee. “He made a big mess promising parents the world. He even went ahead and announced that we would be offering the

IB program. We brought in all kinds of families and then when it all fell through there were plenty of unhappy people. I had to come in and clean it up,” she said.

Darlene’s entire concern seemed bent on establishing her authority as principal and showing that she knew exactly what the school needed. She also worked to show how Kyle’s decisions were often contradictory to the explicit expectations laid out in the British Columbia Offshore Schools manual. Students were being enrolled without entrance assessments, or they were having an entrance assessment done after the decision was already made to enroll them. Darlene noted in many of the student files *this enrolment not approved by the principal*. Kyle met with parents and responded to their requests without seeking Darlene’s approval such as changing a student from one grade to another. It was clearly wearing on Darlene who would spend nights without sleep and put a cheerful face over top of the frayed edges the following day. I would inevitably be pulled in for a discussion with Darlene in her office.

Over the year Darlene’s pain and frustration only deepened. I was able to give advice from time to time sharing my own views of what might be going on. She confessed to me that she often took a naïve view of what people said to her. She did not have a very good facility for catching what underlying motives might be at play. She couldn’t understand when the office staff would take on sudden bouts of silence with her and her natural friendliness was wounded as she desired to get along amicably with all the staff. She could not tolerate or understand when communication took an indirect form, or when stated motives or reasons were only formal, and the actual motives or reasons remained hidden. It came as a real blow to her, after a year of challenging Kyle, recording all his indiscretions with the intention of reporting to the ministry, out of a desire to be faithful to the students, their families and the BC Ministry only to find that Kyle got promoted to CEO of the company. This meant that Darlene and Kyle were no longer

partners in the education process, if it ever was the case, and definitely he was not answerable to her. On the contrary, it was now she who would be answerable to him!

The injuries kept coming and when it became clear that I was going to replace her the following year, she began to look at me askance. She would ask leading questions and attempt to understand how it was that everything was breaking down so badly. I had spent most of the year laying quite low, quietly teaching my classes, letting her confide in me and not making much of an impression as a personality in the school. Now the person she had taken into her confidence was soon going to be taking her office.

“How are you going to turn this school around and keep Kyle from destroying it?” Darlene once asked. There was an implicit assumption by this point that Kyle was completely mismanaging the school and that financially and educationally the school was in trouble. I did not disagree with her about that, but my response was counter intuitive to her.

“If he wants to run the school into the ground, I guess that is what will have to happen.”

Darlene just gaped at me, not knowing what to say. Then recovering herself she tossed some granola into her mouth and said “But you will be the leader, you need to do something right? What will you do?”

“I am not afraid of letting the school run itself into the ground. If the owners have such little sense as to put Kyle in as CEO, they obviously do not understand the negative effect he has. The only way to help them understand is to let Kyle do everything he wants and let the school die. If I challenge or trouble him, it might be just enough treatment to let the illness in the school go undiagnosed. And, if the causes of the problems are not clearly identified, then it is possible that I will be seen as complicit. I don’t want that. I want it clearly identified that he is

responsible. When that becomes the case, then the owners will have a choice, to remain blind or to take action.”

“But you have to think about the families” Darlene replied. “Think of the damage he will do.”

“I know. But that is why I am willing to let the school face death. The hope is to save it, not destroy it.”

I wake up, many months later. It is my first day as the new principal of a new school year, and the apartment is quiet. All I can hear is my wife and son’s deep breathing as they sleep beside me. This is Asian culture and I know of many Thais and Koreans that sleep with their children, often until quite a late age. I get up, put on a pot of coffee. The air is warm with familiarity. Like a treetop nest.

I get myself washed and changed into some casual clothes for work. My first day will be unofficial as I show up to gain my bearings. I drain the coffee into my thermos and insulated coffee mug. There is no coffee machine at work so I prepare a hefty supply of personal brew. I pack my bags, a purse and a black shoulder bag. I used the shoulder bag for years already as a teacher. In it I usually carry my computer and some books but this year I think I will keep the computer at home. The bag has a slot in the front for a calculator, a few pens and this is where I now place my USB which instead of the personal laptop, I will use regularly to make back up files of everything I do at work. I pack a sandwich lunch which I purchased at Paris Baguette. Sometimes I get the little hamburger style sandwiches which I think have beef as well as chicken patties. Sometimes I get a kind of club sandwich. I always pack a cookie. When the school year starts we will have lunches at school and I will no longer bring food with me.

It is my first day back at school and I am about to leave my family. This time, returning to work is different. Normally, when I return to work I pack my suitcases not my shoulder bag. Normally when my son imitates me leaving for work, he grabs one of the suitcases, extends the handle and says “I’m going to work like Dadda!” imitating the real fact that I am leaving for months before I see him again. In the seven years that we have been married and the four years since the birth of my son, this is the first time that I leave for work, to return home on the same day. We do not hang around the whole preceding day slowly and methodically packing my suitcase. I do not need to time the packing when my son is asleep so as to avoid his increasing anxiety as a result of my pending departure. We do not have a sad dinner at one of the local restaurants the night before. We do not take a quiet ride that evening to the airport while my son talks in the dark repeating favorite sayings that we have developed over the holiday. Recently, he has been quoting the *Lego Movie* a lot. “Honey, have you seen my paaaaannts?” (Lin, Lee, Lord, & Miller, 2014). I also do not have to hear my three year old son say “You can go now Dadda” after I give him a long hug and I do not have to watch my wife drive away while both she and my son do not look back. No. Those times are finished. Yet, happy as I was to bring my wife and son to Korea and as exciting as it has been to help them settle in this past week, as I stand at the bedroom door now, listening to the quiet sound of sleeping, and breathe the familiar air, I feel the sudden onset of sadness hit me again. I turn and head out the door.

When I arrive, I put my black shoulder bag and black purse on the black chair in front of my desk, open the cupboard door to the right and noticing some hangars think that I may be able to keep a couple of jackets in there to wear whenever formal occasions are called for. I am the new principal surveying my office and I am not yet sure how to begin. I turn on the computer

and seeing that there is no password I begin cleaning off the desk top. I delete all the desktop shortcuts as they crowd up the desk top making it look messy and disorganized. I decide to open my email box and begin cleaning it up as well. I like to keep my inbox as empty as possible so that I can see in an instant what mail is most relevant and actionable. So, I create folders and proceed to drop emails into appropriate folders. As I do so, I begin making a list of things I need to do. It doesn't take long before I have several items to attend to and several questions to direct toward the CEO, Kyle Kim.

I notice Kyle as he walks heavily toward his office. Kyle is dressed as he often is with a light blue jacket and rather ordinary looking shirt and pants. His face appears aged and as he passes by the front of my office which has a window for a wall. He glances to his left and notices I have returned from my summer vacation, turns around and steps in to say hello. He advances toward me and shakes my hand.

“You're back!” he says in his usual gentle voice and warm smile. “Welcome.”

“Thank you” I reply. “It is good to be back and good to see you. How are you?”

He smiles with candor and says “Not good.”

“Oh, I see. What's happening?” I ask.

“Oh, so much right now! I have a headache.” Kyle says.

“Sorry to hear that. Would you like me to do something?” I ask.

“No, don't worry about it. Maybe we can meet later and discuss some things, but this is my responsibility to solve.”

“Ok. Yes, I would like to meet. I have several items I would like to discuss as well. Can we meet later today?” I wanted to know his views on various matters. What did he think the major problems have been over the past few years, for example? What vision does he have for

the school? What exactly is Hailey's job? What are people's job descriptions more generally? Shouldn't we have a communication chart? When will I get a student list so I can assign teachers to their teaching loads and plan schedules?

"How about meeting tomorrow? I need to speak with many parents today. And, I will get the student lists to you in the morning also."

"Yeah, that would be great. That was one of the things I wanted to ask."

"No worries. Tomorrow is OK?"

"Yeah, sure. I have some other things I need to do anyway" I say, thinking of all the lists I have to prepare for the coming year.

"Great," said Kyle as he headed out the door.

I turned to my computer and began looking through the BC Ministry Inspection Catalogue for Offshore School Program Certification. This catalogue is a report outlining all that the school must have prepared for the inspection team when they arrive. Answering the questions in this forty-six page document and completing the various tables indicates that planning is in place to make a successful year most probable. I began filling in basic information such as the name and address of the school and the number of students enrolled in each grade when I heard a woofing sound in the lobby outside. I knew it was JJ, one of the owners, who often cleared his throat (I learned over time) when he was feeling duress.

It didn't take long before JJ appeared in the doorway. He is tall with a sturdy frame and a booming voice. His English is reasonably fluent, and when speaking one on one, he is soft spoken. He looks like he could have been an athlete and the same physique shows in his son Ronan who is an eighth grade boy with the strength and bounding manner of an antelope. JJ began the previous year as a silent partner, but there had been financial troubles and JJ took over

school operations mid-year in order to set things right. Setting things right may have included many things but from appearances, the changes were physical mostly, including an overhaul of the school entryway, providing assistance to the science teachers whenever they needed supplies, and general work on buildings. In fact, buildings were such a problem that the owners are now constructing another new building to compensate for the problems the last building caused.

I asked him “How was the summer?”

He shrugged his large shoulders and tilted his head to one side. “Ok,” he replied in such a manner that I knew he wanted to say more. I waited.

“I’m building a new school” he announced.

“Really!” I said. Given that finances had been a problem last year and given that the owners had only completed the high school building last January, I was quite surprised. But, I also reflected to myself that it is not surprising. School problems keep getting addressed as physical matters. But, I guess that is JJ’s specialty perhaps. He is an engineer and he thinks in terms of physical design.

“We’ll move the high school in there” he said. He unrolled the designs on my desk, both perspectives as well as floor plans. He pointed in the air to the right of him. He said it is just over there.

“You mean beside us?”

“Yeah, right next door. Just down the street. I’ll show you.”

In a conversation I had with him before summer I understood that he has multiple investments around the world. He told me that his first business was a sailboat company in Korea. However, “Koreans do not like to sail” he informed me and though he still operates the business, it does not bring in much. It seems that his major work involves some

telecommunications companies. Originally he operated a large company in Indonesia, which JJ told me he had to sell because of some legal regulations, but it was his best operation. He said he had majority rights to over 50% of the Indonesian mobile phone system but had to sell because of changes in government regulation. He still operates a mobile phone company in Mongolia where he travels to oversee operations fairly regularly.

Yet he was looking a bit diminished these days though I can't quite explain how. He sits a lot and this brings him down to a manageable size, and when he is not sitting, he lowers his head making him seem less dominating. Perhaps he has been wearied by concerns about the school. Sometimes I wonder if his businesses abroad are really so effective, but then I see another building go up and I guess he must have money somewhere.

"Well, that sounds exciting," I say, returning to the topic of the new building "but maybe we can look at it later."

"Yeah, sure" he said with raised eyebrows and pursed lips.

"What else has been happening?" I prod. "Surely the summer has not been without a bit of drama."

"Yeah," he said with an uplift in his voice. And pivoting slowly on one leg, he turned to close the office door. He sat down in one of the chairs positioned in front of my desk, leaning back he quietly stated "Kyle quit."

"What?" In my surprise, I began thinking that Kyle the CEO, is the one position that stands between myself and the owners. Kyle was the blight that infected the previous principal last year and now he quit? I was both stunned and intrigued.

"It was his seventh time." JJ went on.

"Seventh time!" I repeated, trying to take in where this story was going.

“Yes, Kyle has quit seven times. He waits until a critical stage and then when I need him the most he threatens to quit. You had a meeting with him in June?”

“Yes,” I replied recalling our lunch at the Korean chicken shop near my home.

“After that meeting, he came to me and quit. He just quit because he wanted what he wanted. We had a disagreement, so he quit. He does this all the time. But I needed him at that time because of enrolments. And he told me that when he leaves, he will kill the school. So after September I am going to fire him.”

“I see.”

“It’s black mail. So I am going to fire him.”

“You’re angry with him,” I observe.

“Yes, I am angry” JJ replied. “He talks to all of the parents and makes agreements with them. I don’t know what they talk about. I am the owner, but the parents follow him. I am afraid we will lose some parents.”

I recall how annoying Kyle’s secret meetings with parents were last year. With Kyle it was a one man show that did not suit the collaborative methods of a BC educator.

JJ did not stay much longer for small talk. Just “OK,” and out the door he went.

The next day, Kyle came into my office and sat down. He presented me with the student enrolments which I viewed with some pleasure seeing that we had larger numbers in our classes – roughly ten percent.

As I perused the class lists I skipped to the 8th grade section. Last year we had two 7th grade students and I wondered how many we would have now and was pleasantly surprised to see six students enrolled. As I scanned the pages I saw groups of students, which if I combined

classes, such as first and second grade together I would get a total of 10 students. These were nice numbers to be dealing with and I told Kyle this. He agreed with me that it looked good, and there were about ten families yet to decide.

Changing the topic, Kyle said “I saw JJ in your office the other day. What was he saying?”

“Oh, he was just telling me about the new building. We are going to be moving there?”

“Yes, we need to talk about that also. In about one month, we will move the classes to that building.”

“You mean high school?”

“All the classes. High school is bad. That was one of the biggest complaints from parents last year. The high school is too ugly. It is a mess, narrow halls, dark. No good. But we’re going to move all the classes. Your office will be on the top floor. But I want to ask you. If we take three days off from school, can we move the school? Make it a holiday?”

“Well, I am not sure as far as the calendar year goes” I replied. We are at 179 days right now and I think we require 180. However, I see nothing that states that exactly. What I see is that a certain number of class hours are required. And the way I have set up the schedule, we are running things pretty tight. There is little room to maneuver. Perhaps we could do the move over the weekend and give up one school day. Then we would not lose so much curriculum time.”

“OK, so the teachers could come in on the weekend then.”

“Oh,” I stuttered. “No, . . . no, the teachers would not at all wish to come in. I think you would get quite a bit of resistance about that. They need their weekends. I was thinking rather that someone was going to do the move over the weekend. Then on Monday the books etc. could be moved over by the students. A lot can be moved this way.”

“Ok, that sounds fine. I also want to talk about JJ.” Kyle paused to be sure I was listening.

“He should not be coming in the school.”

“I see.”

“He doesn’t know how to run a school and he is not responsible to do that. I run the school.”

“Yes, I understand” I say, wondering what else Kyle will say. I still recall JJ saying he will fire Kyle. So, I replied “But he is my boss. I am not really responsible to ask him to leave the school. Are you suggesting that?”

“And, did you see the Science lab? There is someone working up there. This is not according to Korean law. You should not have any stranger in the school. Do you know who he is?”

“No, both Darlene and I were wondering who he was last year. I asked JJ and he said this was a business partner in another business he has. JJ asked if it was all right, and we thought if he is out of sight it should be OK.”

“No, even the BC Ministry would not allow such a thing. You should not allow anyone to be on the property.”

“Well, you can hardly expect me to contradict the one who employs me. If JJ wants him here, then that is what will happen.”

“JJ does not employ you.”

“What? But he is the person who the ministry deals with. They send him emails and legal documents etc.”

“Yes, but JJ does not pay you.”

“Who does then?”

“I do” Kyle said.

“Really?” I asked. Doubly stunned. Yesterday JJ told me he was going to fire Kyle.

Today Kyle is telling me he pays my salary.

“Who is the name on the contract?”

“Yeah,” I reflected turning my gaze inward and recalling the name on the contract Chee Vong Ah, not Joseph Jang. “I wondered about that.”

“You see Jack Ah is the one who started the school” Kyle continued. “He and I are friends and I work for him. JJ was brought on as an investor – 50%. And, Jack and JJ were friends also but right now they hate each other. They can never be in the building at the same time. Every day they are sending emails to each other. And JJ is a little bit crazy.”

“Really.”

“Yes, you saw his wife here the other day?”

“Yes.”

“Even she does not want JJ involved with the school anymore. Usually JJ is calm and has a good manner, but sometimes he loses his mind. I think he should see a doctor, really. So, I run the school and I am paying the teachers.”

“And JJ?” I ask.

“He is only an investor. He should not be in the school. Neither of the owners should be in the school. I have told them that they need to stay out and let me run the school.”

This was my second day back at work and I was a bewildered though not entirely surprised. I worked here one year already and knew that there was plenty of political wrangling

to go around and I was and am happy to live with these uncertain conditions. I was and remain till now, calm.

But, I would also say I am intrigued. This feels like a story. A plot, setting and characters that will make for a good tale. At the same time, I think that I have never been in a work place where there has not been some sort of dynamic struggle of personalities. Perhaps I have finally arrived at the place of being able to do what I am capable of doing: manage within turbulent conditions.

The turbulence was not soon to go away. Early in August I had received a letter sent both to me and JJ from the BC Ministry of Education with an invoice for annual school fees. Since this was about school fees and since I had no signing authority I considered that JJ would take care of it and gave it no more thought. Then toward the end of August I received another email from the ministry of Education with an invoice attached for the annual school fees. This time the language was more terse and we were informed that the invoice had been due since the beginning of August and that we were now being warned of overdue payment. The invoice was made out to the VCA Schooling Cooperative. I forwarded the invoice to JJ, Kyle, SH and William, two office workers at our school. The following day Kyle came into my office.

“How did the ministry approve the new school business name?” Kyle asked.

I told him about the Saturday morning phone call to the ministry with JJ and SH before summer. I told him about the paper with the signatures on it confirming that this was to be so.

“This is a mistake. We need to change it. I want you to write to the ministry.” Kyle gave me a general idea how to write the email, and I proceeded to draft a letter as follows:

Dear Irene,

I just had a meeting with the CEO at VCA by the name of Kyle Ghim.

He told me that the bottom line reason for the payment problem is that the invoice was sent to Victoria Canadian Academy (VCA) Schooling Cooperative, the name by which we reconstituted ourselves May 29th 2014. This reconstitution was thought to be the best wisdom in the moment as we would place our school under a legitimate legal jurisdiction while at the same time avoid some of the challenges we have seen other British Columbia offshore schools face here in Korean courts. The jurisdiction is in fact legitimate, and schools have been encouraged to establish themselves in this format however we have learned that under such a designation we are not able to hire foreign teachers. Thus we had to hire and employ our staff under the name of the former company CFS which is still in operation. Indeed, we need to return to our former constituted name of CFS so that we may be properly invoiced. When invoiced as we were before with the designation of CFS the school is ready and able to pay.

In addition, if it is required that a telephone interview take place with the owners in order to reincorporate the school under the former designation of CFS a meeting can be arranged at your pleasure.

Sincerely,
Kelly Card

Before clicking the send button, I asked Kyle to review it. Kyle put on his glasses, looked over my shoulder at the email and personally approved it.

“Shall I send it?”

“Yes, go ahead. It looks good.” Kyle said. He gave me a smile and reached out to touch my shoulder, the way one does to encourage a child moments before giving a speech.

In my mind, I thought – this is it. This is the moment that the school gets pushed a step closer to confrontation. This is the time of truth. I recalled a conversation I had with JJ a few days shortly after the day he told me he was firing Kyle. On that day, I told JJ that Kyle insisted JJ should not be in the school and it appeared that Kyle’s wishes were for the most part being adhered to because I hadn’t seen JJ except on days when Kyle was away. It made me wonder who really was the boss.

“JJ, I cannot answer to two heads,” I told him. “When you are in the school Kyle is out. When Kyle is in the school, you are out. Who am I supposed to listen to? I cannot do both.”

“You answer to Kyle” he said. Very clearly. “He is your boss.”

“Are you sure?”

“Yes, you do what he tells you.”

“OK, then. And you will fire him at the end of September?”

“Yes.”

“Really?”

“Yes.”

“Because he has quit seven times before. How do I know you are not just going to re-hire him again? If he is still here after September, I am...” I paused, thinking that I had a lot of cheek to say this to my boss. “I am going to have a hard time believing you will ever fire him or that you have enough gumption to make the confrontation that must take place.”

JJ looked at me like perhaps he also felt I had a lot of cheek, but he just replied “I will fire him.”

“But in the meantime, I obey him. Right? Even if I know you will not like it?”

“Yes, don’t worry about him. You just do what he says and we will have nothing to worry about after he leaves. Right now he is legally the CEO and what he says is in keeping with the law.”

So, on August 29 one week before the start of school, and two weeks after I first began my regular duties as principal, I clicked the send button that released an email to the ministry requesting a return to the name of the former company CFS. As I did so, I felt clear in my mind that I had adequately prepared for this moment by confirming with JJ that I was a partner with

him, but in the meantime I would obey Kyle. I was also conscious that in obeying Kyle, as I did, my action would raise tempers at school and heighten the conflict to come. I thought of what I had told Darlene earlier that spring day when I told her I was not afraid to let the school die. Kyle, not I, was making the fatal step by communicating to the ministry but I felt very conscious of every step that was happening and did nothing to slow it or stop it or in any way discourage it though I very well could have. I could have notified JJ, or checked with him before sending the email. Instead, I did exactly the opposite. By word, tone or facial gesture I most certainly encouraged this action. And this was in my first month of working at the school as principal. I believed that this action, done by Kyle and permitted by me without any interference on my part, allowed Kyle's motive to be absolutely clear to whomever was making decisions at the school. And who exactly was making decisions at the school remained unclear to me though my instincts told me that JJ was king of these woods.

“The contemplative leader is lucid. Lucidity means gazing upon raw existence without turning away. It is seeing clearly and directly to the depths. There is no need for rose colored glasses or protective illusions or an idealized fantasy of how one would like the world to be” (Eggert, 1998, p. 234).

JJ showed up at my office the next day the first time in about a week, and as usual when JJ was in, Kyle was absent. JJ walked around and spoke with different staff about various matters. Eventually he walked by my door and stood sideways, looking in.

“Hi JJ, I haven't seen you in a while,” I observed. Interesting that he should show up the next working day after I sent the email. JJ came in and sat down, looking around casually.

“So, what is happening?” he asked.

“Well, you know about the email to the ministry right?” I asked.

“What email?” he seemed to perk up.

“I told Kyle about the invoice which hasn’t been paid till now and how we are receiving notice from the ministry that we will be going on probation if we don’t pay our school fees. Discussion came up about how the invoice was made out to the Victoria Canadian Academy Schooling Cooperative. He told me that this was an error because a cooperative cannot hire foreign educators and that I should send an email stating this and requesting that the name be returned to CFS.”

By the time I got to the end of my explanation JJ was now sitting straight up and said “You sent an email?”

“Yes.”

“To the ministry?”

“Yes.”

“Can you forward the email?”

“Sure.”

JJ left my office with a look of concern. A few minutes later he came into the office with his mobile phone, turned the screen toward me and asked “This is the email?”

I looked at his phone, read a few lines and said, “Yep, that’s it.”

“OK,” he said. And out he went. I didn’t see him again that day.

The following day JJ came into my office again. He shut the door and sat down. His presence noticeably darkened the room.

“I want to talk about the email you send the other day” he said. “I showed it to the shareholders and they are very confused. I have to be honest, they were not very happy.”

“Yes,” I replied. “I am sure they were not.”

“There was a lot of conversation and even shouting about it. What you did was very terrible for the school.”

“What I did,” I replied. “What do you mean?” I could tell that a pile of blame was coming my way, but I was ready for it.

“Why did you write that letter?”

“I told you the other day. We were getting warning letters from the ministry about the fact that we had not paid our school fees and were going to go on probation if we didn’t pay up. So, I told Kyle about it and he said we could not pay the ministry because the invoice was incorrectly labelled. He told me I should draft that letter.”

“But why did you do that?” JJ asked. The rest of the school, the room, everything seemed to fade from view and it was just me and JJ.

“You mean, do as Kyle asked? Why did I do it?”

“Yes, you are the ministry representative. You are supposed to manage these things well. Why did you make such an email? You know, the shareholders are upset. Really! I can’t tell you. They are very very upset. That email made a really big mess. The shareholders think we might have made a mistake trusting you with this.”

“What are you getting at JJ?” I asked.

JJ finally left his subterfuge and charged, “You should not have done it. Who gave you the authority to send that email?”

“You did.” I replied frankly.

There was a pause as he stared at me. “What do you mean?” as if sniffing something strange.

“JJ, you told me Kyle was my boss. You said that legally I am obligated to do as he says.”

“But,” replied JJ. “You should not have sent an email without letting me look at it.”

“How am I supposed to know that? Kyle is my boss, you told me I am supposed to do what he tells me to do. When he is here, you are not here. How am I supposed to distinguish between what he wants and what you want? He is legally my boss, I did what he told me to do. Don’t blame me when there is a conflict between what he wants for the school and what you want. That is the very problem that we had in the first place. It is the problem that has existed the entire last year and what drove Darlene crazy. Did I hire him and make him CEO? Don’t lay the blame on me. It is an impossible situation and I told you before that I cannot do what both of you want. You told me, *you* told me that he is my boss. If I did not do what he told me, then I am in essence disobeying you.”

JJ dropped his head in his hands for a good long pause. He looked up at me and said “You are right. It is my fault. I will talk to the shareholders. Definitely with an action like this we can no longer accept Kyle.” He got up, disappeared through the opened the door, clearing his throat with a woofing sound as he passed through the lobby. After that a strange silence. I got up and looked around. The office and lobby appeared empty. The staff had disappeared somewhere and as I stood there alone, looking at the empty lobby and office space, I thought to myself that the school had been pushed closer to its death and now had a hope of life.

One week after school started we had our first staff meeting. There were still many pressing issues of planning. We needed to decide what clubs people would take responsibility for. We also needed to schedule our PE needs so that we could book the facilities ahead of time. We don't have a gym or a field so we have to book PE class off campus. In addition we needed to plan the calendar for the year. I felt that we had not done near enough advance planning last year and this meant that instead of doing professional development sorts of things, we were spending all our time preparing events. More than this, we were delayed from having detailed discussions about goals above and beyond the actual activities.

“So, how about we do a check in?” I said to everyone as they settled down. We had just returned from the park for a community building day of fun and activities with the kids. Some of the teachers had not yet arrived but I felt it was important to get started. Kirsten, the first person to speak said “I feel so wiped, but I think we had a great day!” Madalena, came dragging in some big bag and flopped herself in her chair and all her accessories down on a side table and muttered something I couldn't quite catch.

Apart from Kirsten's comment, it was quiet around the room. Most of the teachers were introverts and they had just spent an entire day extroverting. Faye, the art teacher piped up “I thought the kids enjoyed themselves.”

Brant was taking minutes, but it seemed kind of redundant because I ran the meeting with the agenda on the LCD projector and as people made comments I added my own notes to the agenda they were watching on the white board.

“I know it is pretty hard to move from a long hard day at the park to more planning” I said, but we really need to get some things settled today.” I showed the teachers the agenda and promised them that we would stop at 3:30.

“The first thing we need to do is settle the clubs we plan to offer because students will need to make their selections and we will be starting next week. Do you have particular hobbies or interests that you would like to share?”

“What sort of activities should we do?” Wanda asked. She was one of the quiet ones.

“I used to have a list but can’t seem to find it” I replied. “Some clubs I have done before were drawing club, or Monopoly, chess club. Can anyone remember other clubs we did last year?”

“Alyssa did a knitting club” last year, Giorno said.

“What about some sort of craft?” Faye asked.

“Yeah, that would be good” I said. “Another one would be ping pong.”

“I want to do a fund raising club” Sandra said.

“Fund raising club? Shall I write that down?” I asked, happy that someone committed to something.

“I’ll do the homework club” Tonio said.

“Synthesis club!” Giorno exclaimed in a knowing sort of cheer. This was the name Giorno had given the homework club last year. He still felt a sense of ownership.

“Last year we needed a place for students who did not complete their homework. We called it Synthesis club” I explained to the questioning looks of some new teachers.

“Tonio, you want to do Synthesis club?” I confirmed as I type his name on the agenda minutes.

Faye said “I would like to do something like a culture club. I’m not exactly sure what I would do but I am thinking of focussing on one country each week.

Madalena sighed, as if she preferred to be elsewhere but then said that she would like to do something related to culture or travel. She spoke in a sort of distracted purr, fiddling with a scrap of hair. Realizing she was being attended to, she set aside the hair and sat up in her chair, leaning forward on the table and in a manner that sounded more like a question than a statement she said “I want to do something related to ESL with a culture basis?” She looked across to me, squinching up her nose.

Faye said “Oh, yes... I guess I could do something else then. They sound too similar.”

Madalena, stopped and looked at Faye as if peering through the smoke of a campfire, and in a far away voice said “Oh, I don’t mind if we do the same thing. The difference would be that mine is ESL focussed. It is required for certain assigned students. The students in my club have already been preselected and you do not need to worry about overlap.”

I jumped in, “What do you mean required and preselected? Who is requiring and why the preselection?”

“Oh, didn’t Kyle tell you?” Madalena asked. She started running her fingers through her hair pausing to look at the tips. “He wants the CCP teachers to offer clubs that are specifically focussed on ESL students. Am I right Aida?”

Aida, the CCP coordinator and office staff, nodded her head. “Kyle wants both Kirsten and Madalena to have students assigned to their clubs.”

“Ok, put me down for the culture club” Faye said.

“What would you like to call it?” I said, fingers poised and ready to type.

“Hmmm... how about ‘Global Nations Club’?”

“Yep, sounds good, I said. And Madalena, do you have a name for your club?”

“Hmmm... let me think about it” she replied.

“You know, Kirsten, you do not have to do something serious in the ESL club. Why not make it some kind of games club?”

“Yeah, I was just thinking the same thing” Kirsten replied. “Would that be OK Aida if I just did some games, but use language learning as a base? I think they do school work all day, they have CCP already. I just don’t think clubs should be more work. It should be fun, I think.”

“Yes, I agree” I said. “I sometimes feel sorry for the kids.”

“It’s what the parent’s want” Aida said.

“That’s crazy” piped in Giorno. He shook his head and rolled his eyes like he didn’t know what else to say. Giorno could not help but notice, as I noticed, how decisions around the staff meeting table were being influenced by Kyle while I the principal was an afterthought. Further Aida was acting like a vice principal, informing the rest of us about whether or not my suggestion would be acceptable.

Aida continued “Kyle promised the parents that their children would get extra ESL training.”

“Ok, I know what I will do” Kirsten said. “Put me down for ‘ESL Game Club’ and the grades will be three to six.”

I looked around the room. Anyone else not on the list yet? Who are we missing? It seems we have very little for G. 1 – 2. Wanda, would you be willing to do something for them?

“Yeah, I was thinking I could do some drama with them.”

“Ok, so what should we call it.”

“Uhm... just Drama Club I guess”

“Ok. Done.”

“I was thinking of doing a leadership club” Brant offered.

“That sounds great!” We haven’t really done anything like that before and I think we need it.

“Oh really? Yeah, I was just thinking we could have some room reps and do some planning of special events etc.”

“Yep, sounds good” I said, as I typed down his club preference.

“Ok, we are getting close to our time limit. Would everyone please send me the name of their club and a description so that I can make a letter to the parents and students can make their selections.”

“We’re going to start next week?” Aida asked.

“No, there will not be enough time. I think we can get the letter out perhaps by Tuesday and have all the selections sorted for the following week” I responded.

“But, parents will be expecting clubs to start sooner.”

It was Friday and the weekend was coming. Why should I be using the weekend to prepare letters for distribution on Monday? Parents expecting clubs to begin, for example Thursday just sounded willfully demanding to me and completely independent of any context.

“We are just setting the clubs up, why can’t we take a few days and do it right?”

Silence and a smile from Aida.

“Ok, let’s see what we can do. Everyone try to get their description to me on the weekend OK?”

“Done!” Brant said. “I just sent it.”

“Before we go, can I just make a short announcement?” Kirsten asked. “I want to remind everyone about the Magical Mystery Tour. We will be leaving on Sunday at 10:00 am meet at Line 2 Euljiro 4ga – Exit 5 Market, walk the creek, the big square, watch the changing of the

guard, visit a traditional village, enjoy some more street food and visit the seafood market. Anyone who would like to join us is welcome. Chris and Faye are already signed up.

“Aren’t you going to write my club down?” Giorno asked catching me just as I was about to close my document.

“Oh yeah. Sorry. What was your club?”

“I think I’ll call it VCAwesome Project. It will be, you know... like a club that allows people to do something to improve their environment or their world, whatever.”

“Kind of like the Passion Project Alyssa was talking about last year?” I responded.

“Yeah, sort of. Students will just think about how they would like to improve the school, make a proposal and implement it. You or JJ might need to approve them.”

“Sure, that’s fine. Ok, so VCAwesome project. Cool name!”

“Yeah, I kinda’ like it.”

“All right, I think we have all had a long enough day, shall we all call an end to our planning and make for the weekend?” As I was completing my sentence I looked up just in time to notice Madalena’s black sweatshirt disappear out the door. Everyone else was packing and I could hear a few people breaking into conversations and a few cheers.

In the van that afternoon, as we were approaching our final stop Giorno piped up from the back of the van. He had clearly been thinking about the staff meeting and it had been irritating him since we got in the van. He broke his silence and asked “What’s up with CCP?”

“What do you mean?” I asked in reply.

“Well, what does any of this have to do with the BC program? Why do we have people who are not BC Certified running classes that bear no relation to the BC Curriculum?”

“I really can’t tell you Giorno. I quite agree with you that we should have a real ESL instructor and that this should be coordinated with BC teachers.”

“Soooo, why not do something about it?”

“What do you mean?”

“Well, you are the principal right?”

“Yes, but Kyle is the CEO.”

“But you make the educational decisions at the school. You are the one the ministry has put in charge of the school right? Don’t you think this reflects poorly on your leadership? I mean, I’m just saying...”

Giorno had a way of phrasing questions that could annoy people. He himself would readily admit to this if asked and he confessed to me once that he does come off with an attitude that he knows best. Giorno and his wife Alyssa had been really close to Darlene last year and it seemed that it took no time for Giorno to begin whittling away at my response to the Kyle situation. He clearly felt I was kowtowing and was going to raise it to public awareness right away.

“What do you suppose I should do Giorno? Kyle is the CEO.”

“What exactly does that mean? What is a CEO?” Giorno asked, a mocking cough of laughter.

“It means that Kyle represents the authority of the owners. He is the chief operating officer.”

“But you are the principal. You are in charge of educational matters.”

“The owner is. The owner is ultimately responsible for the running of the school. The owner is responsible for hiring, for teaching, for the condition of the building, everything. The

CEO represents the owner. I work for him. He can hire and he can fire. That means me, it also means you. We report to him.”

“But this is a BC School.”

“Yes, Giorno you are right. But it is a school in partnership with an owner who has his own interests. The owner is not answerable to the BC Ministry except to the extent that they have agreed on certain conditions.”

We came to our stop and everyone got off, Giorno last. He popped his head in. “Hey Kelly. I want to apologize for what I said in the van about reflecting on your leadership. It is just frustrating not knowing where the decisions are being made.”

I really wanted to tell him about the end of September, but I kept my mouth shut. I thought soon enough this would be clearly settled.

Kyle came into my office the following Monday. “Has anyone spoken to you yet about Celina?” he asked.

“Nope” I said. “You mean that girl in seventh grade? You were talking to her and her mother earlier this week weren’t you? She was crying a lot.”

“That’s the one!” he exclaimed as he pointed his finger. “So you remember her?”

“Yeah, it seems there were a lot of problems last year.”

“That’s right. Celina has a little trouble” he lifted his hand to the side of his head and made a kind of back and forth turning motion around his ear with his hand. “Her mother wants her to be at VCA.”

“But Celina appears to quite dislike the idea.”

“Right, right. We are going to try her. I’ll get Hailey to provide the file for you and see how it goes.”

I reviewed the file and it seemed extensive. There were plenty of behavior reports written by Darlene, report cards with comments explaining how Celina is gaining more control over her behavior and better results in math but she might improve completing her homework. There were also medical reports outlining Celina’s medical circumstances – Epilepsy as well as depression and loss of function that has resulted from both the condition and the medications that complicate the condition. Interestingly, both myself and Faye (Celina’s home room teacher) have siblings who have had Epilepsy before and they both have gone on to live fully functioning lives. After discussion with Faye, Celina’s home room teacher, we came to the quite natural conclusion that there should be no reason why Celina could not do well in school as long as accommodations were made for her. As easy as this conclusion was to come to, it was much harder to bring to realization.

For one, there was Celina herself. It occurred late in September, Monday the 29th. Kyle had a few days earlier announced that he was resigning and the following event took place the day before his departure. I had arranged with Kyle for nearly a full week off so I could do my planning work. Kyle had hired a substitute teacher to cover my classes and there was a math class that afternoon. Celina had just begun with us the week before and, I came to learn that, of all her academic subjects, Math worried Celina the most. She often played the role of helpless victim when it came to her math. “I can’t do math” she would frequently announce as she sat at her desk. Or, “I don’t know the first thing about math” to which I would reply “The first thing is to open your text book.” A psychological assessment which I viewed months later showed that Celina was diagnosed mildly retarded with an average IQ of 65 and among all the categories of

assessment, Math was the lowest. I also learned later that Celina's condition meant that any math she did learn would frequently be lost due to cell damage that resulted from her seizures. All of this information was not available to me at the time, but I understood already that Celina was a vulnerable student when it came to math.

The woman covering for me while I was away was Cari Goh. Late in August over lunch, Kyle had introduced me to her. He said to her "This is Kelly. You will be seeing a lot of him." It struck me as an odd statement. I wondered why this woman was someone with whom I should become familiar. During this discussion I found out that Cari had been all over the world. She had a crisp and alert, bright eyed sort of appearance to her. She could recall without hesitation anything she wished to bring to mind and stated at one point in the conversation how much she could not handle studying. She appeared to be the kind of person who was always preoccupied with the next best thing to hit the market, trendy, and riding on the surface of things. At the same time, she could not hide the appearance of crow's feet growing around the sides of her eyes, and there was a world weary look to her as if perhaps she had drained the cup of life a bit too deeply and was still suffering from the morning after. I mentioned that I was much the opposite. I liked to think deeply about things and enjoyed silence. She seemed unable to comprehend such a person. Perhaps she thought I was being ironic.

I had made up lesson plans but secretly worried that something would happen during Cari's classes. She presented herself to me in a positive 'don't worry about anything' manner, but her blasé attitude to the work that lay ahead of her worried me. She had also covered some of my classes in the previous week. I had forgotten something in the classroom and when I returned to the class, the students were out of their desks. Some students were writing on the front board, some were standing around at various points in the class and Cari was at my desk

busily occupied with her mobile phone. She shouted something to the class about there being two more minutes after I stepped in but the appearance of the class was that any time limit to anything did not have any real meaning to the students. My worries were not unfounded. This was exactly the sort of chaos that provoked Celina.

About 3 pm, as I was working in the office there was a commotion in the school entryway where Constance worked at her desk. I could hear Celina's voice. She is tall and the medication she takes causes weight gain so she is also large though not obese. Back when she was healthy and a fully participating student in school she frequently won awards for PE events. Her body is strong and so is her voice and you could hear it echoing throughout the entire office area.

"I don't care!" I heard. "I want to speak to Mr. Ghim."

Celina knew I was not supposed to be at school today and that is why she was asking for Kyle. If I showed up, she would wonder why, if I was here, did she have to put up with Ms. Gho? I did not want to add fuel to the fire, so I held myself back in my office as Kyle moved to intercept Celina. I stood there just behind that door as I heard the quiet murmur of Kyle countered by the loud, and angry words of Celina.

"Why did she push me!" Celina blurted.... the sound of Kyle's low voice... "But that's abuse. She is not supposed to touch me".... Kyle again... Then, "She *pushed* me to the *door*! That's abuse!"

Different staff members from the office paced about with worried and distracted looks on their faces as Celina persisted. Sometimes they would glance at me in my office and I whispered that I wanted Kyle to handle this as my appearance would only complicate matters further. Eventually Kyle was able to settle Celina and her mother was called. I later thanked

Kyle knowing that this was his second last day with us and he did not need to get himself involved in such matters.

I wondered how I was going to proceed with Celina. Her outbursts seemed quite unmanageable.

The following day was Kyle's last day. He was already becoming detached from things spending his final hours discussing matters with office staff in quiet huddles. It was becoming more and more apparent that I was now the decision maker in the school yet I continued to provide him the respect as my superior. He came to me as he was preparing to head out. He walked with the practiced air that you see with Russian president Mikhail Gorbachev. Each movement seemed orchestrated for effect. He came to me, shook my hand as if conferring upon me his blessing. He was leaving the stage. He was bowing. He told me that there was a struggle at the school and he lost. He wished me the best and he told me if I ever wished to call him I could. He mentioned about other schools he was hoping to open and the current school he was working with in Seoul. "Anyway, you have my number" he said. His hand trailed behind him in a kind of half wave toward me as he began looking around to whom he should give final regards. After a few more minutes he was gone. This was about half an hour before school let out.

Later the children left. They knew nothing of what had just taken place. All I could think was Darlene the previous principal had prayed to see this day. Yet, I felt that the story with Kyle was not finished.

Chapter 6 – Accepting the Conditions

John Dewey (1934) relates aesthetic pleasure to the basic dynamic between organism and environment. He says that the task of life is to seek harmony between ourselves and our environment. As long as we are able to do this there will be life and vitality. But the dynamism in life necessitates that there will be times when we are not in harmony and if that disharmony extends too far it leads to death. When we go through periods of disharmony that lead to greater harmony, the feeling of harmony that results is what we would call aesthetic. “When the past ceases to trouble and anticipations of the future are not perturbing [then] is a being wholly united with his environment and therefore fully alive” (Dewey, 1934, p. 17). Efforts to artificially extend such an aesthetic will lead to decay. Periods of harmony are ever only way stations. The challenge of life is to move through one set of tensions to a state of harmony, on to the next set of tensions and then harmony once again.

For a school with only six teachers, it surprised me when I first arrived at VCA last year that there were four office staff. Not only so, but with Kyle and the various owners running around there were about as many adults in the office as there were in the classrooms. It was quite a hubbub for a school that only housed around fifty students. Kyle pretty much ran the office while every other person’s job description was obscure. To Darlene’s view and mine, the main work of Hailey and Constance seemed to be greeting students in the morning, administering first aid, answering the phone and having coffee in the conference room together each morning with the CCP teachers. Officially Hailey was in charge of sales and marketing and early in my days as principal I was told that Kevin wanted me to relay any concerns through her.

“Can you get me job descriptions of all the office staff?” I asked Hailey. “I would really like to know what everyone is doing?” She replied by running down the job titles of each person, to which I responded that I knew each person’s job, but I didn’t know what those jobs entailed. She said she would put something together for me in the coming week. That promise never materialized and shortly after Kyle left, both Hailey and Constance announced their resignation effective the end of October. Privately both Hailey and Constance told me they did not wish to work for JJ the owner of the school, telling me that on an earlier occasion when the school was having financial difficulties, JJ had held back the staff’s wages while paying the teachers their full salaries. William, one of the office staff had gone three months without a salary. But, I was never quite sure what to believe. William seemed quite a nice man to me, soft spoken, gentle and committed to his work. He was the one who carried the company business card and approved expenditures. The one carrying the purse could not be in such a bad state I figured.

Celina remained like a volcano ready to erupt. I was nervous that any day we would see another large flow of molten anger and self pity. It was helpful that besides my principal work I was also teaching and had Celina in my math class because I was able to observe her taking the one subject she hated the most. One day as I was teaching divisibility rules for groups of 8, Celina loudly and with a whining voice complained “I can’t do this. I’m lousy at math.”

“OK Celina, give me a minute. Once I get everyone started I will help you with it.”

“But I don’t get it!” she insisted. “I don’t know what to do!” This interruption of instruction and insistence that she be attended to right away was an old habit that her classmates had become used to. They did not like it. Soon Celina would be getting into an argument with

her instructor about how she will never be able to do math and why does she have to be in this lousy class anyway, no one is nice to her and no one will help her. None of the students looked at Celina. They just stared down at their books focussing on their work making no comment. Someone muttered something which I could not make out. Perhaps it was in Korean. Celina also heard it, but also did not know what it was.

“What did you say?” she asked standing up and turning around. Her voice rising. She stumbled a bit as she rose. In this class, there were no desks, just lightweight folding tables that sat two per side with a hard grey Tupperware like surface. The tables were squished together in a small room and there was little space between tables. The medication Celina took made her sleepy and caused her to gain weight. This, combined with the fact that she was growing and had the usual clumsiness of adolescence affected her motions and she often had the look of someone just settling back to her own corner of a boxing ring after a heavy round. The class did not respond. Only one boy, Roy said “Celina, nobody said anything.”

“Sit down please Celina. I will help you in a moment,” I said.

“But I don’t get it!” she repeated. She continued standing there looking around as if challenging anyone to say anything back.

“I understand that.” It was at this point that someone like Cari, or as I was to find out later Madalena – both untrained teachers – would begin to show visible loss of patience which allowed Celina to push things up another level. “Henry always tells me to shut up,” she would persist. Then, turning to Henry, “I can say what I want,” whereupon Henry would give Celina a narrow eyed hate stare and this pushed Celina over the edge. “Stop looking at me!” Celina would shout. By now everyone would stop what they were doing and watch Celina. This only fed Celina’s desire for attention and Celina would make sure to extend her offensive reach to the

other classmates saying such things as “Everyone in this class is mean,” she would pause, thinking. “Except Deirdre and Kevin,” she added. All this vitriol did nothing to assuage the loneliness and confusion that Celina was feeling but she gained some momentary satisfaction from the drama she enacted. She would pause and gaze at the reactions of both the accused and those relieved of accusation. Her eyes flitting around, her head lowered in a bit of a bullish stance, she would then await the teacher’s reaction. If she was kicked out of class, she merely elevated the accusations to the entire school, her voice carrying throughout the hallways and into other classes and meeting rooms where parent applicants might be inquiring about our school. None of this did anything to help Celina in the long run with either her classmates, her teachers or her life generally.

But I am a trained teacher with twenty year’s experience. Celina was not going to gain the upper hand. After Celina’s last complaint about not getting the math, I continued in a very calm but direct voice. “Celina this behavior is not appropriate. While I understand that you are having difficulty with your math, your demand for immediate attention is making it impossible for me to proceed with the lesson. You cannot dominate the class like this. It is not fair to anyone and it has the further harm that I cannot help you when you present your concerns this way. You need to decide now if you can wait for me quietly while I attend to the rest of the class and assist you in a few minutes or you can leave the class.”

“You mean go to the office?” she asked.

“If you will not stop disrupting the class, yes.” I replied. “But you need to decide right now.”

Celina backed down. “Oh, all right” she said. She groped around for her seat which eluded her grip a few times, and then dropped roughly down. I finished my lesson and got

students started on their work. I asked each group of students one at a time if they had any questions. Some groups had questions which I then answered. The questions were usually brief and a matter of clarity. When each group seemed to be working productively, I then asked Celina to come to my desk.

“Thank you for waiting Celina. It is important to wait until an appropriate time to discuss matters, even if those matters seem urgent to you. Now I am able to help you. How shall we begin?” I asked in soft tones. Celina sat before me and looked very calm. Instead of asking me about her math, she began telling me about her condition. Mirroring the same gentle voice I was using she asked me several questions. Did I know that she contracted an illness from a mosquito when she lived in Thailand? Did I know that she had been among the top students in the class at that time and had won various athletic prizes in earlier grades?

“I had heard something about that” I replied.

“What I don’t understand is why this happened to me?” she said. “Her eyes began to well up with tears. I used to have such a good life and lots of friends, and now I am here and everything is horrible. My dad says I need to work harder on my math. Did you know my dad is working in Africa?”

“No, I did not” I replied. One of the students raised his hand to ask me a question. “Yes, Henry that’s right. You do not need to complete question three.” I looked back at Celina.

“I haven’t seen my father for six months. He was supposed to come home this week, now he has to stay longer. He might not come home for another four months. You don’t know what it is like for me. I don’t have my old life, my father is not at home, I don’t understand my math. I don’t get it... why me?” There was silence between us, and Celina began to weep softly. “And no one understands,” she continued looking slightly over her shoulders back to her

classmates. “I keep telling them I have an illness and I need to take medication but they just call me dogface.” Celina was sharing so much with me that I didn’t know where to begin. One thing I knew was that while she was speaking with me, she was not disturbing anyone. She was purely and simply dealing with incredible amounts of disappointment for a young teenage girl and the drugs and the illness that she was dealing with multiplied the difficulty of her comprehension.

“Celina, I think your life is challenging you in ways that your classmates don’t have any idea about. You cannot really expect them to understand” I said as quietly and as compassionately as possible.

“But I feel so alone,” she continued looking at me tearfully.

“Well Celina, in a way, you are alone in this. No matter how much you explain it, most people will not understand. You don’t even understand it fully, your parents are still, by the sounds of it, coming to terms with the illness, even your doctor just forms a hypothesis and then makes recommendations based on that. But, you and those who care for you, will come to understand your condition more and more. This time in your life is going to cause you to become very mature. You are going to deal with life issues that some people as adults have not even had to face yet. This is going to be a year of tremendous growth for you and your family.”

“Really?” she said. Wiping her tears and seeming to hang on every word.

“One thing I have noticed about you Celina is that when you talk with me you seem very sane. You do not seem strange in any way. You understand the depth of the changes you are facing and it scares you.”

“You’re not kidding!” she said, grabbing some tissue from my desk and blowing her nose while looking right and left to see if anyone was watching.

“The other thing I know about you is that you are a very strong and determined girl.”

Celina's eyes glittered, and her head cocked slightly. She smiled a half smile. "You know that? How do you know that?"

"Oh, it is hard to describe but you seem well able to make demands on people. It is a sign of strength, but it is also often inappropriately done. You have to tone down your manner with others and use that strength to overcome your challenges. I know you are lonely right now, but actually you are not alone. You can say at least that I am supporting you. There are others as well and there will be more. In the meantime, you can talk to me any time you feel you are overwhelmed."

"Really? Anytime?"

"Yes, if your teacher permits it. We can settle the details about how to do this later. I just mean for you to understand that we can deal with this."

"I have no friends here. Everyone hates me."

"Like I said, they do not understand. The first person who you need to be friends with is your self. Understand yourself, accept yourself and the friendships will come. Even if people don't like you, at least they will come to understand you. That will be a step in the right direction. Loudly complaining about the people in your class will not encourage them to become your friend. I would say for now, you should just give up on the friendship expectation. For the next four months you need to learn to accept your conditions. Face them, learn about them and do not run from them. Your past is gone. This is the new reality and you can face it. You can learn to live with it and be happy. Once you make friends with your self, then we can work on reaching out to others and perhaps gain a friend in this school."

"Really?"

"I am sure of it."

“Hello? Is this mother of Celina?”

“Yes?”

“This is Mr. Card. I am calling from VCA.”

“Oh, hello Mr. Card. It is late, you are not too busy?”

“No, no, I am happy to call.”

“You know I am a lot worried about Celina. Do you think Celina can stay at VCA or not? She seems, ah – big trouble.”

“Yes, I understand. I just wanted to tell you that Ms. Howard, Celina’s home room teacher, and myself both have siblings who have epilepsy and we have both seen our siblings go on to live very productive and happy lives.”

“Yes, really? Sorry, can you say that again? Celina has any siblings is that your meaning?”

I realized that I had a language barrier to cross so I just said as simply as I could. “Ms. Howard is Celina’s homeroom teacher.”

“Yes, did Celina do something wrong?”

“No, no. Please don’t worry. I am not calling to say anything bad.”

“OK. So, what do you want to talk about then?” Celina’s mother sounded relieved.

“I wanted to tell you that Ms. Howard has a brother who has epilepsy.”

“Really?”

“Yes, and he is a successful young adult now.”

“Really?”

“Yes. He has learned to manage his epilepsy.”

“Oh, that is good.”

“Yes, and I also have a sister who has epilepsy, and she has successfully overcome it.”

“Your sister also?”

“Yes.”

“How did she get better?”

“Maybe we can talk about it at school. It is a long story. I just wanted to call and tell you that I think we can work with Celina. I think we can find a way for her to be successful in our school.”

There was silence on the other end of the phone.

“Celina can attend VCA?”

“Yes, and I think we can help her also.”

“Really?”

“Yes.”

“Are you sure?”

“Yes, I am quite sure. Ms. Howard and I discussed it and we think there is no reason why we should not be able to help Celina.”

“She really does not like math.”

“Yes, I understand. Celina has a big fear of math.”

“Yes, right. She is afraid. My husband always pushes her but she refuse and get angry.”

I thought about something Mary Rose O’Reilley once wrote. “We plan lessons with a notion of what students need. But here is ... Sylvia, whose block about math holds her together while her spirit heals some painful abuse” (O’Reilley, 1998, p. 2).

“I think Celina does not need to be pushed in her math right now,” I replied. I wanted to say that Celina’s father also needed to accept Celina’s condition. I thought that perhaps she needed to stop math altogether, replace it with therapeutic art, but the idea was still in germ.

“The main thing I want to say is we can work with Celina. I know that you were asking at the office how Celina is doing and I wanted to tell you we can work with her.”

“OK. Thank you. I am very worry about that.”

“Its OK. But I think we should meet at the school sometime soon. Can you call the school and book an appointment? I will speak with Aida and she will arrange it.”

“I should come to the school?”

“Yes. We need to talk in more detail about Celina and make a plan.”

“OK.”

“Just call the school and speak with Aida.”

“OK.” And, after a pause, “Thank you.”

The mother sounded both relieved and uncertain. She, like Celina, sounded overwhelmed. I felt Celina and her family were somehow only just waking to the new reality which was Celina’s illness. In time, Ms. Howard and I were able to meet with Celina’s mother and with the assistance of a translator Celina’s mother was able to provide us with a list of all the medications and side effects of the medications that Celina was taking. We were able to view a profile provided by a psychologist and with all the expert opinion, and parental input we were able to make an Individualized Education Plan or an IEP. This meant devising a plan that would address Celina’s unique needs and alter her educational program in a way that acknowledged that Celina is more important than the curriculum. Celina was removed from the requirement to do math and Ms. Howard was able to devise an art therapy intervention that

promised to guide Celina in an exploration of her emotions and the development of social competence. Over time it proved to be very effective. However, there were hurdles we had yet to overcome as we would soon enough find out.

Not long after my phone call with Celina's mother, I followed up on an incident I had heard by chance. It happened in Madalena's room the previous Friday. It was now Monday and I went to Madalena's room to find out about it. What I heard supported my view that Madalena, who was not a trained educator, was making some unfortunate decisions in her relations with the students, particularly Celina. I came to give her some professional advice about how she could better manage matters in her class however, rather than taking my advice, Madalena quickly went on the offensive.

"You know she is pumped up on drugs!" Madalena began. "Do you know what her medication is? Do you have any idea what it does to her brain? Don't you worry about lawsuits?"

At that time, I had no clear ideas as I had not yet met with the mother. I only knew that Celina was with us the entire previous year and she seemed fine. "I have worked in the US" I said, "So I understand your fears about lawsuits but as a Canadian educator we don't worry so much about such matters. Besides, what claims could possibly be raised?"

"She is dangerous! You know Korea is quite litigious don't you? They are very much like Americans that way."

"That might be, but I need to proceed according to British Columbia norms."

"So what are the norms for someone with Epilepsy? Do they even allow students like that in a school?"

“Allow them? Of course. They don’t even consider it an issue really. Its more a matter of awareness raising. I sent an email about this with a link to a BC webpage. It explains it quite clearly.”

“You sent an email...” Madalena repeated lightly dismissive, her voice trailing off as if speaking to a child who had accidentally wandered into the wrong class. “What if she has a seizure in class?”

“There are protocols. They are in the email and I shared similar protocols with you earlier in the year, do you remember?”

“I think we have to meet the parents. We need to know exactly what her medication is, what the potential risks are by having her in the school? She’s a big girl you know. I cannot allow her in my class. I have spent the entire summer developing a very sophisticated English program using very high level English resources. Celina is not even near competent to handle it.”

“Our program should be available to everyone,” I replied. I thought to myself how limited several of our students are in capability and wondered why Kyle bothered to develop this course using such inaccessible literature.

“If the BC Curriculum has a place for her then CCP will most certainly have a place since CCP is a support program.” I thought to myself. How can Madalena just tell the principal that she is not going to accept a student in her class? And why is she so hostile to Celina? How can she imagine her English program to be so definitive and lightly determine that Celina is an unwanted appendage?

“OK, I want to meet with all the teachers. I am tired of these secret meetings.”

“That’s fine. There is nothing secret about our discussions. We will meet with everyone as part of the process of making an IEP. You can have your say at that time.” Again, the hostility! I had known Madalena just over a month and she was making plenty of odd assumptions about her role in the school, as well as mine and the protocols for dealing with educational challenges. As I left the room, all I could think was how Kyle had made such a mistake in hiring her, and I wondered what he had in mind. Madalena appeared to consider herself the only real educator in the school, one who was going to deliver a meaningful education to these children, something that was beyond the pale of most of us common folk. From my perspective, she was a danger to the students.

Meanwhile, October was not far away and JJ was hiring new staff to replace Hailey and Constance who were likewise responsible to train the incoming office staff. A new person started Monday. In the meeting room behind closed doors but through the windowed wall, you could see Hailey and Constance talking to the new hire with long looking faces. A few days later the new staff stopped coming to work. Again, someone else got hired, Hailey and Constance would train them, and then the new hire left a few days later. This happened several times. By the end of the month Constance and Hailey were gone and Debbie Pae was the only new hire who stayed on. Debbie told us that Constance and Hailey did not help her understand her job very well. Most of what they did was bad mouth JJ. Debbie felt it was suspicious however because there were a lot of other good staff working here and she needed a job so she stayed despite the unclarity about her role and the fact that she had to do the work of both Constance and Hailey without being certain what those two jobs entailed.

“What about Aida?” JJ asked. “Do you think she is on Kyle’s side?”

“I doubt it” I said to JJ. “She is often complaining to me about Kyle. She has heard some of the things Kyle has said about us and the school and can’t believe he is a Christian. They used to go to the same church and now she is continually stunned by what she hears. Whenever I ask her opinion or assistance she is unhesitating.”

“OK, let me think about it. What about that teacher, what is her name Madalena? What do you think of her?”

“She doesn’t seem good to me.”

“Why?”

“Hmmm. She just seems detached. Not really a part of the group. She talks as if she is in a dream. She wears black. She slouches around. She was absent for two of the orientation days and when I asked her about it she said “Didn’t Kyle tell you? I was doing some jobs for him. I apologize, I will be there next time.” But then when she finally showed up to the meetings she arrived late. She flops around and sighs and seems generally annoyed at having to participate.” I did not mention anything about Celina, but her intransigence regarding Celina was, to my view, Madalena’s greatest deficiency and a sign that she can never work with children. I was aware however, that others too had a prejudice against Celina and I did not wish to mention her.

“OK. I want to look at her emails. How can I do that? They are school’s emails right? It is my right to look at them?” I told JJ that it probably had very much to do with Korean law. If the school owned the emails then the owner had a right to access.

“You need to talk to Giorno. He is the one who manages the accounts.”

“Madalena’s with Kyle” JJ told me the next day. “There are many emails between the two of them. It seems she was running the school. He was giving her directions. Telling her what to say to you. I have to fire her. I want you to do it.”

It didn’t take long for her to be fired. However, I refused to do it.

“It cannot be me JJ.”

“Why not?”

“BC ministry has protocols. I would need to give her warnings and opportunity to improve. It could take a very long time. You, on the other hand, can fire her. She is just staff. She has nothing to do with BC Ministry. She is not certified and she is not teaching any BC Curriculum.”

“So, if she is not BC related you can fire her too.”

“Except that I am a BC principal bound by the codes that this office requires of me. She could report me to the BC Ministry and it would raise questions about the school. The ministry can inspect.”

“OK, I will fire her.”

During that same period, the elementary teachers and I had a meeting about another one of our students, Harold. Harold, a second grader, also demonstrated special needs but in contrast to Celina, none of us had any assurance how to deal with him. I met Harold one day when he was brought to the office. The previous day he had locked the door to the roof where we had a playground with grass and trees. Recess was over and despite shouts by students and the teacher, he refused to open the door. The teacher on the roof had to call for assistance using his mobile phone. Harold was then reported to me.

The following day, Harold sat in my office, wide eyed, and gap mouthed. He appeared like someone who had been tranquilized. “Hi Harold. Your teacher asked me to talk with you about locking the door yesterday on the roof. I want to ask you some questions about that because I would like to understand the situation better. OK?”

Harold continued looking ahead, only glancing at me to nod an indication of understanding.

“First, I want to be clear. Did you lock the door to the roof yesterday as the teacher says you did?” There was a long gap between my question and his response. I wondered if Harold even heard me. He looked at me, swallowed, then stared ahead into space with his mouth agape.

“Did you lock the door?” I repeated.

After some duration, Harold finally allowed a whispered response to escape him. “Yes,” he said. It was so inaudible that the ‘s’ sounded like a soft breeze passing through grass.

“OK, thank you Harold. This helps me understand. Why did you lock the door?”

Again, there was a slow-slowness to his response as each word seemed to find its way through his thought processes and then sneak out his mouth. I soon understood why the elementary teachers who dealt with him were concerned about our ability to assist him. His responses were consistent with what the teachers described.

“Fun,” he eventually whispered. No glance this time. When the answer finally arrived I was startled out of a day dream about the fire drill we would be doing soon.

After the meeting, I checked in Harold’s file and saw that he was earlier refused admission by Darlene who claimed that his language ability was low, but it was obvious to me that we were not dealing with a language issue, and I guessed Darlene knew that as well. As I consulted with teachers, various items were detailed about the challenges faced with Harold.

The issues were a mix of behavioural, social and academic and these issues seemed to point to an underlying condition. I asked the teachers if it was their opinion that we could make progress with Harold. They all agreed that they could try some further interventions, as they had already done, but they believed it would not ultimately succeed. The only solution would be to request that the parent hire an aide who would accompany Harold throughout the day and provide him with one on one attention.

After the meeting, I saw Hailey in the conference room and asked if she could set up a meeting with the mother. Hailey seemed to understand what we were up to. “It’s not working with Harold is it?”

“You know about Harold?” I asked.

“Oh yes, and the parents understand. Kyle spoke with the parents and the parents just asked us to see if it is possible.”

“So, when they enrolled Harold they knew it might not work out?”

“Right.”

“So, this meeting will not come as a surprise?”

“Oh, no. They expect it.”

“Really?” I asked. “So, I could just recommend that they find an alternative educational setting where they can find the sort of support that Harold needs? I really don’t want to offend them.”

“Yes, sure. You can tell them.” Constance was in the conference room at that time as well. She and Hailey approvingly nodded, repeating together once again, “They know. You can tell them. It is no problem returning the tuition fees.”

I assumed we can return tuition fees. No need to tell me that. It seemed Hailey was almost giving me permission to go ahead and have Harold removed from the school. I also felt a bit relieved because I was only six weeks into my term as principal and now I was removing a student from the school. I had originally thought that perhaps we would start a slow process of awareness raising with the parents, but felt that if Harold was enrolled conditionally from the outset then it was more like a trial enrolment that had not stuck. As was customary with Kyle and the rest of the Korean staff, no records were kept of meetings with parents. There were understandings that were had, and I depended on Hailey and Constance's recounting of the agreements and discussions that took place between them, Kyle and the parents.

Midway through October, after teaching Science, I rounded the corner into my office and found both JJ and Aida waiting for me. JJ's face looked pained. Aida spoke first. "The seventh grade parents are in the library. They want to talk with the principal."

"Really, all of them? About what?"

JJ, who was pacing in my office with his hands on his hips, dropped his hands. "There is a student here named Celina?" he asked raising his lowered head as he did so.

"Yes, what about her?"

"She is a kind of problem student? Making trouble for the other students?"

"She is not a problem student. She is a student who has problems. Big ones and they are not easy for her to deal with. We need to support her."

"She makes it difficult for the other students to learn? She draws a lot of attention to herself?"

“Every student does that sometimes. Celina has had some special challenges, but we are addressing them. I can explain to the parents.”

“They are not here for an explanation” JJ continued. “They want her removed. All the parents of the class are here, ten of them. It is a lot of parents we cannot upset them.”

“What are you telling me? Because Celina’s classmates don’t like her we are going to kick her out of school?”

“Not because they don’t like her. They understand her situation.”

“I don’t think they do. I am not going to kick Celina out.”

JJ looked at me. He seemed to beseech me to understand the situation. “You can’t speak strongly to them. They are really, really upset.”

“Well, I am upset!” I said. “Why do they think they can just come in the school and gang up on a student? They are being bullies. This is not how we treat people.”

“But she is a problem” Aida said with a kind of challenging look on her face.

There was silence.

“She has had some outbursts, but I am working with her. She is a normal girl who is dealing with an extraordinarily challenging condition. She needs understanding, not this intolerance. I find her to be self aware and open to our assistance.”

“The parents feel their children have endured enough. There were problems all last year.”

“I really don’t know about last year” I replied. “All I can say is that I will not remove anyone under these kind of mob conditions. You can count on it. I would quit my job before I do that.”

“Ok,” JJ said. “The parents just want to know what you will do about the outbursts.”

“These will stop.”

“How do you know?” JJ asked.

“I will not allow it. We have a discipline policy. There are consequences to such actions. It is the same for any student. First time, half day in school suspension. Second time, one full day in school. It gets more and more severe each time. The fourth time she gets removed.”

“If she disrupts the school now what happens?”

“She already spent a day out of school. The next time is two days out of school and then one more time and she would be removed.”

“Ok,” JJ said, “just let me do the talking. You will have a chance to speak, but just speak gently. Tell them about our discipline policy. Tell them about the steps to your procedure.”

Together we walked into the library, JJ first, then myself nodding and smiling to the parents – some of whom nodded in return, others looking to the side or down to their laps, mothers all, with very serious looks on their faces. They were acting as though some harm had been done to them and they meant to get payback. Aida slipped in quietly after us, sitting near the door. All I could think of was the girl who sat weeping in my math class at the immensity of the challenges she had to face; the girl, who given the opportunity to express her legitimate needs in legitimate ways, was completely responsive to cues of appropriate behaviour in class, as responsive as any child would be.

JJ and I sat on one side of the board room table in the center, all the parents sat on the opposite side. JJ did most of the talking in Korean. I had no idea what he was saying. Eventually he asked me to describe our school discipline policy which I did in English. I explained where Celina was on the policy and assured the parents that I was determined to follow the discipline policy for all students. I don't remember much else about the meeting. The parents were

satisfied in the end, if grudgingly. I sheltered Celina from their wrath but wondered how her classmates would behave given the animosity these parents seemed to convey. I realized there was only so much I could do to contain this situation, but was also pleased that I did not allow myself to be caught in its energy.

Part of the discussion that always existed between Darlene, JJ and myself the previous year was that Kyle's presence put the integrity of the BC Program at stake. He had established CCP for example, which was redundant. He accepted students for entrance who had not been assessed by the principal. He seemed to promote American universities when BC Offshore's existence (from the point of view of the British Columbia government) was to make transition into British Columbia post secondary institutions a natural outcome. With Kyle gone at the end of September, there were numerous angry parents wishing to meet with JJ who wanted to know what he was going to do with the school. Kyle had given them promises but now Kyle was gone. JJ's response in those meetings was to assure parents that the principal would take over Kyle's duties but that there would now be a focus on British Columbia schooling. We would maintain the integrity of the program and be true to the British Columbia model. I agreed with JJ and placed the integrity of the program uppermost in my mind as we moved into the coming year.

However, it became apparent during these meetings that the parents were not universally excited about such a change in emphasis. Some parents did not want a real school, with a real curriculum leading to a real schooling certificate. They essentially looked at us as a language and fun school or as a stepping stone into an international school and did not treat us with the

seriousness that other families seeking post secondary education abroad were treating us. We began to refer to these parents as Kyle's people.

It is with this in mind that I now turned my attention to Harold for whom we had no plan in place. We had no plan in place because we believed Harold had needs that exceeded our ability to provide. Darlene had already rejected Harold during the application process, but during the summer after Darlene left and I was away, Kyle enrolled Harold. A few weeks further into the year and with Kyle gone, it was my job to return to a proper balance between looking after students and restoring the integrity of the British Columbia program which was the basis of existence.

It was this thinking that motivated my decision for assisting Celina, and for denying Harold. We could legitimately provide assistance to Celina, despite protests of parents and some staff. Harold we could not. And, fortunately Harold's parents understood this. I would soon be meeting with the mother to make plans for Harold to move to a school more adapted to his needs.

I met with the mother of Harold and Aida translated. I spoke in English, and the mother spoke in Korean. During the meeting I outlined all that we were seeing with Harold, first the positive and then the list of concerns. I told her what we had done to address the concerns but concluded that based on these matters the teachers and myself agreed that we did not have the resources to meet the unique challenges Harold presented to us and felt that a different school might be more suited to helping Harold. The mother seemed understanding until she requested that we keep Harold to the end of December. But why, I thought? If you already felt that this was simply a "test and see experience" for Harold, why when I indicate that it was not going to

work would you request that he remain longer? It is then that I thought perhaps the mother was not *testing to see* but preferring rather to just have a place to keep Harold. I felt I needed to block the mother's intent to simply use the school as a way station as so many other parents seemed to be doing. I reminded Aida in English that we needed to protect the integrity of the school and I insisted that Harold needed to go by end of October. The mother then explained the awkwardness of the timing. She too was a teacher but in Korea exams would take place at the end of the month and Korea is crazy about exams, so much so that even airplanes are not allowed to fly over the city during the time that exams take place. She would have little opportunity to find a place for Harold and prepare for these exams which were a little more than a week away.

Her circumstances sounded genuine and we eventually agreed that the mother would do the best she could in finding an alternative for Harold as soon as possible and we would do the best we could to manage with Harold in the regular program but if it turned out that we could not maintain the quality of programming the other children deserved because of the time and attention Harold required we would have Harold go to the Prep Program class. The mother agreed to this. We ended the meeting in smiles and I was satisfied that we were doing the best for Harold in a collaborative and caring way.

Aida informed me the following day that Harold's parents had decided to pull Harold out of the school right away. This came as a welcome relief actually. They weren't even going to wait until the end of the month. It surprised me, so I asked Aida about it. "He's going stay with his grandparents who will go on a driving holiday. They'll look for another school later when there is more time. The father and grandmother are going to come next week to pick up Harold's books and other items left in the locker. They wish to speak with you when they come."

“OK, sure. That’s fine.”

As I was pulling the van out of the basement parking lot, JJ motioned to me to come out of the van and speak with him. “What did you say to the parents of Harold? It seems they are really angry at you!” JJ pointed his finger at me.

“They are angry? We just had a meeting and it seemed that we came to an agreement.”

“Yes, that is what Aida says also. Anyway, you will need to meet with the father. He wants to talk to you. He specifically mentioned that he is angry at the whole staff of the school but especially angry with you. He wants to talk to you.”

“That’s fine.”

“Also, Mr. Yi will attend the meeting. You need to let Mr. Yi talk. Did you kick that child out?”

“No, I did not. I made an arrangement with the mother that she would try to find a place and we would try to keep him until a more suitable school could be found. She understood that we did not have the resources to assist him. She seemed to understand, agree even, and left the meeting smiling. I do not know where the anger has suddenly come from.”

“There are problems with refunding the tuition. I can’t give them their money back and they say you must return the money. Since you are in charge of the school and since you kicked their child out, you must return their money.”

“I have nothing to do with tuitions” I replied.

“I know. But, its complicated. You see when Kyle started the school this year he took the tuitions and put the money into his own account. The school doesn’t have any of the money. I cannot legally give them any money. If I did, I would be breaking the law. It must come from

school funds, but there are no school funds. I told them they need to go to Kyle to get their money. But they said that Kyle did not kick their son out. You did.”

“I did not kick the son out. We advised the mother that he would be better off in another school but we were prepared to keep him until the end of December. We specifically discussed this and as I understand their tuitions were paid until December only. It is the father who has made the independent decision to remove Harold. If anyone is to blame it would be the father. Between myself and the mother we had made an arrangement to mutually do the best we can.”

“Anyway, you should not remove any student without talking with me.”

“Yes, that is fine.”

On Hallowe'en day, JJ dropped by to let me know that Jack Uh, the former operator of the school and still a silent partner, sent an email to all the parents of the school. He was remarkably noisy and dissatisfied for being the silent partner. The email described several uncomplimentary things about our school but among the items in the email was the claim that I had made some complaints about the management structure of the school and I made those complaints to him. JJ asked me to draft a letter to refute these claims for release by the end of the day as the email had made several parents quite angry. I was more than happy to oblige as I was eager to make a public statement showing my affirmation for the direction the school was going and contradict any false statements made about me.

Harold's father and grandmother came to the school. It was 10 am. I welcomed both the father and grandmother with a smile but their faces showed no welcoming return. True to my Christian background I adopted a much harsher tone. Jesus said to his followers that they should share their peace with strangers. However, if the strangers did not return their peace to them,

they should shake the dust off their feet. He told his followers that the strangers who do not return their peace, are not worthy of them. Inwardly, I shook the dust off my feet and waited in my office until Mr Yi showed up.

It didn't take long before Mr Yi was speaking with me in my office in his usual quiet and gentle voice, using slow and broken English. He told me that these parents were going to threaten a lawsuit against me but that I should not worry, JJ will handle it. I told him I understood.

“Also, if you are able to apologize it might help,” Mr. Yi continued.

“I'm not sure what I can apologize for” I replied.

“I know, but if you can see a way to show something to this father it might be better.”

“OK, let's see what happens” I said, and we went in the library. The father and the grandmother sat on one side of the main central conference table situated in the middle of the library. I and Mr. Yi sat on the other side. Once again I greeted them both. The grandmother scowled at me. The father did not even look at me, but greeted Mr. Yi as the two exchanged some formally polite words to each other. Turning to me, the father began speaking in Korean which was translated by Mr. Yi throughout the entire encounter. The father put his mobile phone on the table and said he was recording my responses. He further informed me that he had spoken to his lawyer and said that he was planning to sue me. He asked me if I had checked to see if there were funds available to return the tuition owing to him after kicking his son out of the school. Each sentence uttered by the father seemed calculated to convey the highest contempt possible. He stared at me, now. Hard. He held a firm gaze and spoke in the tones one would use with a naughty child. He further said, that he already checked the law on these matters and claimed that there was no escape for me from the charges.

I said “I cannot answer any of your questions, as much as I would like to, under threat of a lawsuit. If you intend to record everything I say, then I will say nothing without a lawyer present. I regret that it has to be this way because I very much wished to speak with you about the matter of your son.”

The father heard and understood but did not abate. He continued to assault me with one accusation upon another. He told me that his wife had recorded the entire interview when we had initially discussed what to do about their son. They heard me speaking to Aida about protecting the school program. They could not sue me for this statement but it was clear that this had angered the father very much. Mr. Yi spoke respectfully to me all the while that he was translating what the parent had to say.

Celina meanwhile was having one of her worst days since the day before Kyle left. While I was looking across the vast emotional gulf between myself and Harold’s father, I could hear Celina in the lobby calling my name. “Mr. Card? Mr. Card?” It was the first time she had taken up my offer to seek me out when she is having a difficult day and her voice could not be ignored anywhere on the main floor of the building. “I really need to talk to you Mr. Card?” Celina eventually found her way to the library where I was experiencing my own personal DMZ. She knocked on the library door. It opened enough for her to poke her face through the door in profile as her eyes looked sideways around the room, “Mr. Card I really need to talk!”

I did not wish to interrupt my opponent sitting across the table from me, still speaking in his Korean monologue, still using the lecture tone with me, seeming oblivious to Celina’s intrusions. While I continued to listen politely to nothing I understood, Mr. Yi made motions and spoke in short Korean phrases to the door and Celina backed out, only to return again five minutes later. “Mr. Card, how much longer before I can talk to you?”

Despite all of this negative energy, at the conclusion of the meeting and despite the fact that the father would not shut his recorder off I said to Mr. Yi, “I need to say something before he goes.”

I looked to the father and said “I can tell by looking that you are very angry. I understand this anger. I am sorry that I cannot provide a response that would satisfy you and I am doubly sorry because when I heard you were coming I thought I had an opportunity to make things better for you and for your son, but instead I found myself facing an enemy whose only desire was vengeance. I too have a son who is a bit younger than Harold. I know what it means to care for a child and be concerned about how he is cared for by others. I wish we could have talked about this matter together as two men who understand what it means to raise children in this world. I would have liked to work with you. This event today was far from my anticipation.”

The father heard what I said, but did not reply. He spoke very politely to Mr. Yi, as did his mother. They both took one last cold look at me and as we walked out the library I met the corresponding scowl of Celina who was sitting outside the library. As soon as she saw me come out she asked “Why didn’t you talk with me Mr. Card? I really needed you.”

I told Celina to come to my office. She followed me in and plunked herself down in one of the chairs in front of me. “Celina, I was in a very important meeting which you interrupted several times. Whatever the matter is that you are dealing with, it has to take second place. Your right to speak with me is always dependent on my availability and the permission of your teacher to come see me. We have spoken about this before. And, it is this behaviour that I have told you before can lead very rapidly to your removal from the school. Do you understand that?”

Celina looked at me. I continued before she could reply. “You cannot disrupt, take over and intrude upon other work that is taking place in the school. You cannot make yourself the center of attention. Do you understand?”

“Yes,” Celina seemed to back down. “I just needed to talk.”

“OK, well I am ready and I am happy to talk with you. What do you need to tell me?”

Celina began to describe how Ms Athaleya (Madalena) had kicked Celina out of class for something that to me sounded trivial, but also sounded consistent with what I understood about Madalena. I made the judgement that I was not going to give Celina an in-school-suspension for disrupting the school because I already made up my mind that I did not trust Madalena’s judgement when it came to Celina. I told Celina that I would look into it. Celina asked me if I was going to suspend her and I told her that as far as me and my meeting which was disturbed, I decided to release her of her accountability. As far as Ms. Athaleya was concerned I would look into it and she would need to wait before I could decide on a response. Celina seemed to understand and she then relayed her story to me in greater detail which I cannot now recall. I only recall feeling that putting Celina in Madalena’s class was a danger, not to the class or to Madalena but to Celina. I was not going to punish Celina for what had very likely been stirred and aggravated by Madalena, not the other way round. I asked Celina if she had sufficiently calmed herself down and would be able to rejoin her class after lunch. She said she was going to be in Ms. Howard’s class and the Hallowe’en party was coming. She was coming to like Ms. Howard I noticed, and Celina thought she would be fine.

The Hallowe’en party was a whole school event organized by the Student Council. It was the first student council formed at our school and the first event they organized. They did a

terrific job and the entire student body participated. There was a haunted house, games and treats, scary movies and a costume contest to wrap up the afternoon. Halloween excitement was in the air. Both floors of the main building had something for students to do and all student council members seemed delighted in their leadership role. I met a number of parents at this time as well, and one of the parents said that they were interested in starting a Parent Advisory Council and wondered what I thought about that. I said, in principle, I am quite interested. The question of when we might proceed is more open. I said that there was plenty we needed to settle before we could initiate the PAC including the fact that we had our first year with exams and we had graduation to think about three years away.

As we headed out the door that evening, I saw Aida looking at her phone. She told me, just as I was packing my bag to leave, that Ella the Prep Program teacher submitted her resignation. She gave no explanation, only that she would not be coming to school on Monday. William the loyal and dedicated office worker whom I had a high regard and affection for passed out our pay slips in person as we headed out the door. He was the one who first welcomed me to Korea at the airport and I will not forget his warm smile. He did not show for work the next day. At first I understood that he had taken a holiday, but over the course of a few weeks it gradually came out that he too quit his job. I never saw him again. All Kyle's people left the school.

It was Friday October 31st. In three and a half weeks the inspectors from the ministry would be coming to assess our school.

Monday morning the staff were informed that the prep class had disbanded and would now become a part of the regular classes in the school. I had drafted a letter over the weekend to

the Prep parents explaining that their teacher had resigned and while we were planning to assess the entire class for entry into the BC program by the end of November we moved the date up as a result of the circumstances. Students would begin taking normal classes immediately while I began entrance assessments, after the fact. Meanwhile we needed to prepare for report cards which would be coming out at the same time as the inspection team visited the school.

JJ dropped by the office and we spoke a little about recent events. “By the way, weren’t you planning to move us to the new school sometime?” I asked, just remembering incidentally that we had discussions of this earlier in the year making plans to put some walls in for added rooms, determining where to put the science lab and art room.

“Yes.”

“When?”

“I think next week.”

“Next week? Aren’t we rushing it a bit?”

“We need to move out by the fifteenth. Actually, CFS is renting the building and they are not paying the rent. The owner wanted us out on October 31 but I persuaded him to give us until November 15.”

“I see. OK, I understand. So how are you planning to do this? Shall we shut the school for a day or two?” I asked.

“For what?”

“To allow the movers to do their stuff.”

“I think we can do it” JJ replied.

“You mean the teachers and students?”

“Sure and the office staff. Everyone. We’ll pack everything up on Friday...”

“This Friday?”

“Yes, can we use the staff meeting time? We can pack all week. I will bring boxes in. Then if there is anything left I will get it done on the weekend. Fergus and I can move the big furniture on the weekend. On Monday we can use the morning to move everything over. If we don’t get finished, there should be enough furniture moved over that students can start taking classes and we’ll just finish up the rest of the moving during the week.”

It was exciting to move to a new building. Students had been complaining about the building we were in, and as the word got out about the new building there was plenty of excitement. However, it was just another bit of chaos to add to the mix. Many of the teachers on staff were teaching for their first year. We had now completed our first eight weeks of school, classes were finally becoming settled with routines, walls were filling up with art works and other signs of productivity and learning gained traction just as the news of the impending move came.

Moving Monday as we called it was drizzly and cool. Our old building was set on a hill and we needed to carry much of our items either up or down stairs and then across a field to the building on the opposite side. There was plenty of mud tracked into both buildings. Students were cooperative. Helping with school cleaning and various chores is a normal expectation for Korean students. Most students who stopped helping appeared genuinely tired.

By the afternoon teaching was underway even while teachers were scrambling to find missing books, markers, garbage cans and other accessories. Things were lost and things were found. Till the time the inspectors arrived a couple of weeks later, the library had no exterior wall and though we had bookshelves, none of them were mounted. Boxes of books were stacked here and there laying unopened and exposed to the elements.

In the office we discovered that with our new computer network, none of us were able to print directly to the printer from our computers. The one who knew how to reset the access to the printer was William, and it was about this time that it became clear that William was not coming back, nor was he providing any passwords. He apparently had all the official business stamps for CFS as well making it impossible for us to conduct any further business in the name of CFS. At least, we could not do so legally. We had two weeks to figure out how we were going to print report cards.

The legality issue was getting under my skin. So much was going on that I was beginning to wonder if I could trust JJ as I thought. I had received a text message on the morning that the inspectors arrived. It was from Kyle the former CEO. In the message he stated that I should tell the truth about the ownership of the school. I should tell the ministry that the school is owned by CFS and that the license to operate as a BC school is falsely attributed to the VCA Schooling Cooperative. Kyle said he trusted me to tell the truth about this matter.

Yet, if CFS ran the school why has Kyle never been on campus since the end of September? Why did he have to send messages to me covertly rather than just come in my office and give me orders as a CEO would surely have the right to do? Further, teachers often came to me with rumours by parents that JJ was taking illegal actions. To be honest, I had no way of knowing who legally was my employer except that someone by the name of Jiang Ji Wang claimed to be my boss and came to the school campus every day and made daily improvements to the physical environment. He gave direction to the office staff and he seemed to be the man in charge. He was committed by word and deed to the success of the school. He worked harder and was at the school longer than anyone. And, as I often pointed out to staff.

“Look at his son, Ronan. Ronan, despite his mischievousness, is a basically good and capable boy. He seems balanced. No one can raise a child like that and at the same time be devious and duplicitous. All my past experience told me just the opposite. It was Kyle who was devious and I was not going to place any trust in his messages. I simply relayed them to JJ and he told me how to respond.

This was my state of mind with the arrival of the inspection team. I had already met one of the team members Jaspar Vance who had inspected the school the previous year. The inspection leader Henning Coiseam was deeply involved in the BC Federation of Independent Schools Association (FISA) and most especially the Christian Schools component. He knew my former principal from so many years ago Armont Baxter. As soon as I met Henning we spoke about our mutual contacts and he assured me of his recognition that I was a brother in faith. Having established our credentials we quickly went ahead into the issue of school ownership.

“The ministry is concerned about this issue and asked us specifically to look into it so we will be asking Mr. Wang to explain the documentation regarding the changes taking place in the school. My question to you is, do you have any uncertainties?”

I explained that I certainly did have uncertainties, but shared what I understood about the facts that Kyle the CEO resigned, JJ Wang was the man on campus and that his son attended the school and seemed to be stable and balanced indicating a good parentage.

“In your heart of hearts Kelly, during your worst most suspicious thinking did you suppose that Mr. Ghim was scooping money from the school?”

“Not really,” I replied. “I had not thought of that, though I suppose that was possible. It was my view that Mr. Ghim was planning to take over the school and eventually pull it away from being a BC school altogether. He seemed to have no appreciation or respect for the BC

way of doing things and all his moves seemed geared to establishing a different set of priorities.”

Mr. Coiseam seemed to understand and showed a lot of sympathy as well as analytical clarity. We discussed various other details and then afterward he asked me “This is your first year as principal, right?”

“Yes, it is.”

“I don’t suppose you were ever anticipating this were you?”

“No, I can fairly say I did not.”

“Are you sure you are up for it?”

I thought for a minute.

“Madeleine L’Engle says every calling must be tested,” (L’Engle, 1983) I replied.

“When I first started teaching I had one of the worst students I ever taught in my entire life. He eventually got kicked out of school but we found out later that he had intentionally planned to get kicked out and his goal was that he would take me out with him. During that first year I had naively informed him of my home address and during my stay in that apartment had a pellet shot through my living room window, had happy faces carved into the walls just outside my apartment door, and had prank phone calls to the rate of hundreds in a 20 minute period. The new owners who parked their truck in my parking spot had their truck stolen and burned the day after I moved out. The thing is that despite the chaos I experienced that year, I learned from that student. I never allowed circumstances to reach such a stage ever again in my life. The principal and staff felt I had endured a severe spiritual attack and it was these very attacks that showed the importance of my work. I feel very much the same about my work here as principal.”

“I understand and respect that” said Henning. “I want to encourage you to keep the faith then. Is there anything we can ask Mr Wang that you would like to hear? Perhaps something that might be uncomfortable for you to ask directly?”

I declined his offer, but Henning’s words of encouragement, coming from someone who could easily have written a scathing report of the school, brought me to tears. I did not exactly cry, but it was close. I simply asked him to be diligent in the matter of sorting the ownership issues. I felt a great deal of responsibility, not only as principal and accountable to the teachers and their security but I was also the ministry representative and accountable to communicate issues of importance between the school and the ministry. Surely ownership would be on the top of the list of items the ministry would be concerned about.

The next day our inspection was completed. We had five commendations, six requirements for maintaining certification and ten suggestions for improvement. Further, it was indicated in the final report that the inspection team believed that since I was teaching half time, I did not have sufficient freedom to complete all my duties as principal and offshore school liaison.

We did not get the best review, but I did not mind, despite how it might look on my record. Actually, I was happy to work in these less than ideal circumstances and quite agree with (Eggert, 1998) that “Contemplative leadership ... involves a paradoxical stance of love in the midst of contingency and death, ... The legend of St. Francis kissing the leper, ... is illustrative. The contemplative leader kisses not only the excellent organizations but also the diseased and disfigured ones” (Eggert, 1998, p. 234 – 235).

When I arrived to work, Danton the 2nd and 3rd grade teacher came to my office and submitted his resignation effective end of December. He waited until we passed our inspection,

but the uncertainty about ownership and the often delayed paychecks affected him and his family too much leaving him no option but to return back to Canada. We had four weeks to find a replacement.

Over the holiday I was able to think about events as they had played out till now and pondered the external empirical environment and the internal subjective environment. I caught a cold in the middle of December and I noticed how much it intruded on my life. It pushed me to the edge of my ability to meet other people's needs and push came to shove.

I got cranky with my mother shortly after she arrived for a Christmas visit. In the final week of school, when I was the most tired from the accumulation of events till then, with the Christmas performance looming, I came home where she was waiting. The moment I opened the door she got up from the couch and intercepted me with her good natured chattiness. It felt demanding much the same as if it were Celina waiting in the foyer. I stood there holding my coat listening as she casually spoke of a novel set in Norway that I gave her one previous Christmas and how it recalled her visit with family back to the homeland the previous summer. This lasted for twenty or thirty minutes. I was interested in these topics but my mother did not seem to notice that I hadn't yet fully entered the apartment. I had not been able to unload the psychological burden of the day and was already getting more burden piled on. This incident offended me as my mother proved incapable of taking gentle and polite signals, such as my feigned motions to go to the bedroom to hang up my coat. I grew to suspect she was being intentional. I thought, let it pass this time, but then she did it again the following day, the second time more intense than the first as if she were trying to trap a mouse. Each of these occasions occurred before my cold set in which I blamed on my mother. I believed that her cravings, nay

demand, for attention created the tipping point to my physical illness as she added stress upon stress when it was simply not necessary. In addition to wanting to chat she seemed bent on identifying ways in which she was not being noticed, pictures of her were not evident in the apartment, we had not sufficiently coordinated our dinner times, she said the food was *nice*, yet her helpings were so tiny as to be negligible.

It is not normally my habit to place demands on life. I prefer rather to find within the conditions of life the pleasure that the situation affords. As CS Lewis said, of a friend of his: Jenkin “seemed to be able to enjoy everything; even ugliness... [and claimed] that we should attempt a total surrender to whatever atmosphere was offering itself at the moment; in a squalid town to seek out those very places where its squalor rose to grimness and almost grandeur, on a dismal day to find the most dismal and dripping wood, on a windy day to seek the windiest ridge... He continued [Lewis said] ... my education as a seeing, listening, smelling, receptive creature” (Lewis, 1955, p. 199). Like Lewis and Jenkin, I prefer to experience and enjoy life’s many ways of presenting itself to us. And further, it is my belief that others need to learn this openness as well. It is a life skill. Call it adaptability. We all need to adjust our internal environment in order to adapt to external conditions.

Never-the-less, when others around me are incapable of enjoying life (adjust to external conditions), I will attempt to change the external conditions to their satisfaction out of sheer generosity, believing that their incapacity to enjoy life, in the state in which it is found, indicates a deficit in personal capability. And, while I try to adjust the external world for them, my goal is ultimately to help them adjust internally and be more accepting of reality. Further, while I try to help others in these matters I still believe it is something that each person needs to resolve on their own. No one can make another person happy.

In the case of my mother, she was on a holiday. She was retired. She came on a visit to enjoy her family, but all she seemed capable of doing was finding fault. I pitied her for the damage she was doing to herself but I could not allow myself to take on any added burden at that time. And, while I am normally accommodating, I had to make a calculation of how much energy I was able to expend and on this occasion I decided she is just going to have to look after her own personal affirmation and accommodation to the conditions. For me it was an issue of the school struggling to survive versus how many family photos are on display. I basically communicated a put up or shut up attitude to her which inevitably made her holiday with us not nearly as satisfying as expected, nor as long.

Weeks followed in which I had to endure coughing, and I do not know how many sleepless nights – during the holiday! I suffered coughing fits where I was unable to catch my breath. My stomach muscles were tender from coughing so hard, and every cough brought tears to my eyes. During one such fit, my son repeated a question to me over and over. “Dadda, where’s my purple transformer?” I, of course, was unable to answer let alone breathe. Kanin just repeated himself again and again, I got angry at him. As soon as I was able to catch a breath I told him, “Kanin, stop talking to Dadda. I cannot tolerate any more questions. I am so frustrated from coughing that I would like to hit someone. Anyone!” He apologized saying “Sorry, Dadda.” To which I replied, “Oh, no need to be sorry my son.” I pulled him toward me and hugged his head gently against my chest. “It is not your fault, Dadda just cannot handle one more demand right now. I am so annoyed with this cold that simply does not go away.” It is apparent, that I too was having my issues with reality as it presented itself to me.

As we drove the nearly forty-minute drive to work the first Monday morning after the holiday, I mused upon the barren cherry trees lining the dimly lit highway in the morning. They appeared to me like ragged black horses after a battle in the field, lined up for presentation, riderless and abandoned, nobly awaiting the return of their riders as they snorted and waved their tails in the dim dawn light. It spoke to me of “the aesthetic category of the tragic... [which] comprises whatever is ‘heroic’ in organizational life: that mysterious pleasure which consists of both suffering and the representation of it” (Strati, 1999, p. 185-186).

Last night I had a dream in which I came into a place like a museum or a church where there were several shrines on display. As I approached the shrines, it was clear to me that I was getting a response. A light would begin to glow within the shrine, glowing brighter as my proximity increased. I felt a physical, personal presence associated with the shrines and asked those around me whether or not the phenomena could be trusted. Most people speaking with me seemed to believe so, but it was I not they, having the experience of interaction with the shrines.

When I finally settled on one shrine, a light began to glow within and I saw a crescent shape. This shape slowly grew larger and it appear as an arm holding a bow. As the body began to take shape around the arm, it became increasingly clear that the figure was a male holding an eyepiece that appeared to pierce the eyes of the wearer, and he had a board on which were mounted about four other eyepieces. He motioned that I should wear the eyepiece. He had the appearance of a god. Naked. Young. Strong. As he motioned I understood from him that I was being asked to give up my eyesight so that I could wear the eyepiece. I heard the phrase, “You must give up your sight if you wish to see.” I realized I had to make a decision to give up my sight. I was afraid and hesitated. I asked the man if he was my brother and he said “Yes.”

Chapter 7 – Between Conceptions

The teacher we hired in December to start work January finally began work the first week in April. The problem was on our end. JJ set up a new business license and there were delays getting this settled. Initially I continued teaching while Mr. Haru got himself oriented and gradually took over classes. By the second week, I was completely free of my teaching obligations. It didn't take long for the addition of space in my schedule to have its effect. I was soon surprised to find myself thinking *I am enjoying my job*. I began noticing other corresponding conditions.

First, I noticed that my attitude of being a channel of blessing to those around me returned. Since about October, my attitude has been one of survival, or watchfulness - sentry-like. I was perpetually standing guard, watching for the next disturbance to burst in upon the life of the school even while I was labouring to clean up two or three prior threats to our existence while at the same time trying to juggle a teaching schedule.

Second, I felt a bit more settled. As a first year principal I had to think through each issue as it came up because I had never been responsible for such things before; on-site inspections, report cards, Christmas performance, hiring new staff etc. This did not even touch upon tactical matters related to the switchover of ownership, including most importantly losing nearly the entire office staff (along with their skills and institutional memory), discrepancies around salaries, late payments or lack of payslips, concerns about health care, incorrect deposits into our pension funds, parents angry about change of ownership, mishandling of tuition fees, and fighting rumours raised by the former CEO and his friend and part owner of the school, Mr. Uh. At this point, mid-way through the year, on the schooling front, most patterns had been established and I was thinking about improvements next year.

Third, I felt it was appropriate to take some credit about staffing for the following year. Given all that had taken place this year, it was notable that for the first time in three years of operation, the school was in a position where we were losing only one staff member. In previous years we turned over almost all staff at the end of the year. Until recently, the complaint was *because of all the uncertainty* but now the comments are that *things are getting better* so...

I am also conscious right now of what might seem to be my recklessness. I have three main areas of risk operating in my life. First, I brought my former employer in Kuwait to a lawsuit regarding unpaid indemnity settlement. Their dispute with me is that I broke contract. My dispute with them is that their contract did not follow the legal restrictions of their own country. At stake is pretty much my life savings for the past decade. If I win, I nearly double the payout they planned to give me when I left Kuwait. If I lose, they pay me much less, perhaps not anything at all. Further, I had to counter a long held taboo in international schools which holds that if you break contract with your employer, you will be blacklisted and no longer able to search for work in the major international job fairs.

This has only recently been resolved after nearly three years. I won the claim, and won it in a big way. The courts declared that I was to be paid even more than I originally claimed as my employer was cheating me of other payments I had not considered. It is interesting to me how a legal decision can change how one might be viewed as an expat worker, from distain as a kind of betrayer of the politically correct international school codes of employment to being revered as a sort of paladin on behalf of human justice.

Another issue is my dissertation which I have been working diligently on for about three years. Time is coming to an end for this project and I am currently being questioned if I have

gone beyond the time limit. There are reasons why it might be thought I have gone too far, (and reasons why it might not), but I am still hopeful that there is room for negotiation. The bottom line is I simply wish to do the best job I can possibly do on a topic and a method that is not well worn. I knew inwardly what I wished to solve, but I had difficulty formulating it externally. I could not readily identify other people speaking explicitly of the problem I wished to solve though I saw the problem everywhere I looked. It was a diffuse question and the very act of identifying it seemed to take me half way to solving or understanding it.

Work life. My current employer has asked me to represent myself to the Korean government in certain ways that carry the possibility of being fraudulent. I do not think they are so but I cannot be certain. It is a bit like my earlier days when I used to rent out a basement suite in Canada to supplement my mortgage. The suite was not legal, but as long as no one complained about the suite, the government would ignore it. My first wife and I were able to sustain a comfortable, but by no means excessive, lifestyle based on this legal gray area. I found out later that the government allowed these illegal suites because there was such a lack of housing that we were actually filling a necessary social service of inexpensive housing. But, one does not always have access to such information and must therefore go with a best guess. I feel I am making a best guess with my employer in a country where I cannot even read the legal documentation. I simply rely on JJ's explanations and my faith in his commitment to the school.

I push the boundaries of acceptability. And, this places me, and more so my family as well as others at risk. I guess this is the role of artist. The hardest thing for me is to determine if what I am doing is good. As to suing my former employer it was pretty clear. I am working to provide more, not less security for my family in the long run. I am working for justice generally – as it may benefit my colleagues who remain at the school in Kuwait. But, I did have to counter

my employer who disdainfully said “I don’t know how you can sleep at night” when discussing my challenge to him. And spending so much time on the dissertation also puts people at risk. Some would argue I should have been less concerned about getting personal satisfaction out of my actions and more concerned about achieving the degree. And, why did I have to reach for the obscure and unpopular topics and methodology? But wouldn’t it have been more selfish of me to take the easy road? Maybe not. Many people have been patiently waiting for me to complete this project. Finally, with my current Korean employer, my actions in support of my employer in legally foggy areas put more people at risk including perhaps the other teachers at the school, yet what are my alternatives? Shall I quit my job and put the other teachers in an even more tenuous situation? Then finally in all this stress and tension, how do I keep my personal life in balance? How do I satisfy my internal needs for comfort when I feel like I may be in strange territory? What honey traps tempt me? Certainly, nothing animal or human is foreign to me and by pushing boundaries, there is the potential to lose balance.

Faye tells me that one thing she appreciates about me is that she is well aware I face stresses she doesn’t even want to think about, but what impresses her is that every day after slogging it out at work, we get into the van and I carry on cheery and joking conversations with the teachers. She is a bit of a tense person but one of the most caring and effective teachers I have worked with at this school. Her opinion matters to me.

How did I ever come to be perceived as a leader? How did I ever perceive myself as such? I am a slow person, not especially useful in our hyper-efficient world. I have always been ponderous. I am the one who comes at the tail end of a conversation with something to contribute that is no longer relevant to the pace of the conversation. As a student in public

school I always felt that teachers moved on to the next unit just as I was acquiring an interest in the topic. You could think of this as a disability. And maybe this is at the root of some of my distaste for systems which just relentlessly press forward. Perhaps this also represents the poetic versus rational approach to things that has been a constant theme for me. I like to mull; to plod along and experience life.

And how did I come to the place of no longer looking outward for an internal sense of certitude? That's an interesting question. I think it had to do with the early realization acquired during the many moves I made from school to school. Sometimes I would show up at a new school and be the most popular and brilliant student, loved by all. Other times I would show up at a new school and find myself the butt of everyone's joke. My entire social reputation would be turned upside down simply from moving to a new school. I learned as a child that how people viewed me had more to do with the context I entered and not so much to do with me. Whether this is the cause or not, as far back as I can recall, I was never compelled too much by my outward circumstances and that includes people. As a principal I often refer to the moods and culture at school as the weather we sail in and that teachers need to read the conditions.

All my life people have been asking me, why not consider going into leadership? It started as early as my first teaching assignment, continued when I was a substitute teacher, and it was assumed without asking that I would be a leader in the American school I attended. I always rejected these suggestions as just another burden to bear. "Why would I want the extra work and heartache?" I often replied. The eventual conscious decision to become a leader came about finally when I encountered the Enneagram.

The Enneagram is a personality inventory that rates individuals according to nine different personality types and within each personality type there is a continuum ranging from

most destructive to most constructive along nine points. It is interesting because not only does one find one's type using the indicator, but one is also able to peer into the potential for self destruction. It was frightening because as I read the lower levels of the scale, I could recognize myself. For me, the observer, the one more ruled by his head, I descend into self destruction as I turn away from the external world to seek solace in my inner world. What helps me avoid such tendencies and round out my personality is to take an interest in the world and actually do something for someone. I recognized the descriptions in the Enneagram to be true. For the sake of wholeness, I pursued formal leadership and thus avoid the self-indulgence that comes so easily.

We started the new year in September with hope that all would be settled now that most or nearly all of the families that had supported Kyle were gone. We basically had a clean house but our enrolment had dwindled down to 38 students. JJ knew we would suffer loss but had not expected the end of the previous year to be quite so bad and he also expected more new enrolments by the beginning of September. It didn't happen. Out of about 25 applicants who came to the school during the summer months, we only acquired 5 new students by fall. Not a very auspicious start to the second year under new ownership.

Thus it was in early October when one of our very best students, Lawrence Song, president of the student council came to the office to complain bitterly about his Math and Science teacher I knew we had a problem on our hands. Somehow, Lawrence had a falling out with his teacher Ms. O and he was beside himself with distress. Lawrence, had a long history with the school. I knew him to be an industrious and capable student. But he had unreasonable

expectations and every teacher who taught him wrote comments in his reports that he needed to be less hard on himself.

Lawrence came to my office and started laying out his grievances against Ms. O. First, she not only allowed Korean to be spoken in class, she even spoke it herself. Second, she was more like a friend to the students than a teacher. Third, she willingly shared confidential information (such as his grades) to other students. While I had no quarrel with Lawrence's basic claims, they did not match up with the level of emotion he expressed and I wondered from the very beginning if he had shared his core concerns or not. I soon learned that behind the issues Lawrence raised, was the set determination by Lawrence and his family that this teacher should go. If the teacher did not go, then the student would go. To support his claims of incompatibility between the teacher and himself, Lawrence produced a letter from his psychologist indicating that merely the presence of Ms. O provoked a kind of psychotic episode that Lawrence did not have the capacity to overcome.

It did not take long for JJ to get wind of these matters and it was JJ's intention that we could neither lose Ms. O (whom all the other students liked a lot) nor could we lose Lawrence. If the President of the Student Council left the school we were sure to lose more students because of the sense of instability this would cause. We had to satisfy the student while not losing the teacher. I tried to help Lawrence by providing suggestions about what he could do, based on his perspective alone but I had trouble identifying with his extreme emotion in the matter. In my heart, I felt he had to "man-up." As I was growing up, I had many teachers who were far worse than what he was claiming yet I never felt so disturbed by it. Never-the-less, I promised Lawrence sincerely that I would investigate each matter completely.

During the same period, I found myself in Mr. Vernon's room one morning to speak briefly with him about a student who was giving him a hard time. As I turned to the door to leave, Ms. Edgar poked her nose in the room. Her look was overwrought: hair was disheveled, make-up a bit pasty and distress was written on her face. "Hi," she said to me. Looking aside to Mr. Vernon, "Sorry for the interruption I will take just a second." Again she turned to me "Are you available for a few minutes after this meeting?" she asked, her voice rising as she spoke. "I just need to speak with you for a few minutes if you are free after this meeting. Can you just come into my room?"

"Sure!" I replied, trying to continue optimistically, knowing how much Ms. Edgar can go on about intricate details of matters that bother her and the more she talks the more she works herself up. She is an interesting person and if she is not in any form of distress her conversation can be very informed. However, when she is upset, and this is easy to do, she can circle and circle around a topic and pick at it like a bird pecking at a bright object, until she is able to root out the annoying glint. She hops, tilting her head, pecking, scratching and earnestly finding ways to pry the bright object loose. She grimaced backward to me as she hopped to her room, feathers all askance.

"Please have a seat" she beckoned as I entered the room. She hunched over me a bit, adjusted her shoulders, crossed her arms and then with an intensity in her eyes, she began to pick. With one extended arm, fingers poised together in a three finger point, she began chopping toward me. "Have you checked your bank account yet?" she inquired.

"No."

"I didn't get paid yet. You can tell when a business is not stable here in Korea. They start to miss out on some part of your salary. Then they give you some kind of excuse. They might not

return your taxes, or they might. I've been around. I've seen this before. If a company tells you they can't pay you but they will pay you the next day, that's fine. But when a company tells you they will pay you on Thursday and it is Tuesday of the next week and you still do not have the money, something's wrong, see. Why can't they pay you?" She was picking up pace as well as tone. "I know these Korean's boy. They can really do a number on you. You can't be naïve. You can't just say like you do in Canada that the company is going to take care of you. No, you have to look out for yourself. Will you do something for me?"

I looked at her, like I was staring face-on with a hawk. Eyes looking slightly cross. "Sure, what would you like?"

"I know you are just the principal and you do not handle the paychecks, but can you speak to Mr. Yi? Can you tell him that we need our money? I have things I need to pay for today."

"Yeah, sure" I replied. Of course I can speak to Mr. Yi. It is needful I thought.

"Yeah, you gotta watch them boy! You can't trust them. I always watch."

"Well, I agree that they need to pay our salary but funny enough this conversation reminds me very much of my mother. We had many of these sorts of conversations when I was a child. I prefer rather to adopt the concept of downward mobility, which is to say I would rather suffer abuse then be suspicious all the time and self defending. To me, it is about the kind of world we wish to have."

"Oh, you have your right to your philosophy."

"Yeah it is more than a philosophy, it is a lifestyle. I want to have more generous views of people."

“This is not our country. We need to know their laws. We need to defend our rights. You know there are so many people here who just want to take advantage of the foreigners.”

“Yes, I understand. I cannot assume that everyone is going to take on the view I hold and I need to make sure to attend the needs of students, teachers, my wife, son and extended family. Never the less, my motive is different. I am not so much about defending rights as I am about trying to find a path to generosity, and fair-mindedness knowing that we all have our failings.”

“Yes, I know you have a different philosophy.”

“Not a different philosophy. This is not pie in the sky, it is a lifestyle and I wish to see it spread. I think that defending one’s self is not the way to build community. One needs to be prepared to suffer loss. That means suffering. I am willing to suffer loss for the sake of building relationship.”

“Yeah, so will you do that for me? Will you talk to Mr. Yi?”

“Yes, I will.”

As I was speaking with Ms. Edgar, I realized that I was seeking a subjective ideal. I wanted a world of mutual sacrifice where people were willing to suffer for others. And, I am not speaking of an unrealistic ideal. My rational understanding of it is as follows: We are social creatures and we all need the care of others. Yet, we cannot guarantee that this will be provided. If we try to control it, or manage it, then the care we get will not actually be care, but the fruit of our own labor. What we think of as care is more like salary – earnings for the labor we put in. The only way to gain unmerited love and generosity from others, is to create a society in which we give of ourselves with no expectation of return. It requires risk.

Sandra came in the other day. She told me that Lawrence doesn't hate her anymore. She asked me if I understood why she was so upset. Lawrence had been, of all the students, the one she had gotten along with the most. To hear that he hated her was devastating to her.

I told her that any teacher who is going to last, any teacher that is going to face the real world of teaching will have their vocation tested and it will be different for everyone. And, it will be challenging. How else to explain the 50% of teachers in North America who are said to leave their work within the first five years of teaching (Smith, 2006)? For some people it will perhaps be the requirement that they document all their work, for some it may be that they have to stand in front of a crowd of people, for others they will meet with some challenging parent, student or policy. For her, the challenge was to face the betrayal of a student relationship she had come to believe was most promising.

Shortly after resolving the issue between Lawrence and Ms. O we had our annual inspection. The chaos of the previous year was pretty much absent and we had nearly all the same staffing as the previous year. This year, we had a library in place, we had our computer lab running and we had an operational cafeteria. I had initiated an ELL program involving assessments in September as well as February using a program developed in Alberta. It involved four levels of assessments (K-3; 4-6; 7-9; and 10-12) with proficiency levels in four categories (speaking, listening, reading and writing) graded according to rubrics with a scale of 0 – 6. It was very sophisticated and the inspectors acknowledged our achievements. The inspectors noted that we allowed students into the program who were not sufficiently competent in English and thus outside the BC standard, but our ELL support program appeared to balance this. We also had our IEP program which likewise was carefully developed following the BC protocols. I had

completed every suggestion and requirement from last year's inspection team and where last year we had five commendations this year we had ten, last year six requirements this year two, and where we had ten suggestions before we now had three. The report was in effect, glowing and was quite a turn around from the previous year.

Unfortunately, the calm between Lawrence and Ms. O did not last. It cropped up again at some indiscretion Ms. O had made where it appeared that Ms. O was giving special favour to the girls in her class and leaving the boys out. Lawrence felt anger and could not sit down. He just stood at the back of the class by one of the shelves. Ms. O insisted that he return to his desk, and he said he did not want to. At some point he picked up a boxcutter that was sitting on the shelf. He clicked the cutter shut muttering to himself that it was not safe to leave the cutters open. Lawrence's actions were seen by all the students and it was interpreted as a threat. Ms. O sent a student to come get me. When I arrived in the room, I saw Lawrence, still at the back of the class.

"Hi Lawrence" I said.

"Hello Mr. Card. I just did not want to sit with the class so I am at the back of the room here. It shouldn't be a problem should it?" As Lawrence lifted his face toward me, I could see strain. He fidgeted a lot. Despite his clear agitation, he spoke in his usual respectful and soft spoken manner.

"Its fine with me Lawrence. However, I think for now, you should come to the office. Let's have a talk."

"OK" he said. He grabbed his bag, walked past me and headed straight for the office.

The office visit turned out to be three hours of expressed rage, much of it indecipherable. I tried to communicate that what he did today left an impression on both Lawrence's friends as well as Ms. O. They all felt threatened and that for the remainder of the day he should just go home.

Lawrence gasped and in his typical soft spoken voice pleaded with me, "I should go home because of the box cutter? Mr. Card have you ever known me to be a violent person?"

"No, never. This is not a punishment. This is for your emotional and physical protection as well as the emotional and physical protection of the other students. Right now you are distressed, so much so that you have been communicating your frustration and confusion to me for the past three hours. You have the entire office staff worried because of your emotion. You need to go home where you can calm down, and then we can deal with the issues you are raising." Lawrence did eventually calm down, and he went home at the usual time without incident. A meeting was arranged to speak with both Lawrence and his mother in an attempt to bring some resolution to the entire matter.

The meeting was in the conference room. It is a small room beside my office with a sliding door overlooking the one small field we have. The walls are white with a stick-on image of bamboo and the saying *Great hopes make great lives*. It was JJ's idea to put this and other images and sayings up in various parts of the office. There is a white board on the wall opposite the sliding door with ghosts of some script that was recently erased. Aida and I, Lawrence and Lawrence's mother were in attendance.

I began by stating my intention for the meeting which was that I acknowledge Lawrence's distress and believe that some of it is based on accurate understanding and some of it

based on false understanding. My goal was to help Lawrence with the situation as much as possible but first we needed to look at the prevailing facts. The facts that Lawrence originally raised were investigated and turned out to be true which were that Ms. O *did* make a deal with the students that they could speak Korean in her class, Ms. O *was* more of a friend with students than a teacher and finally, Ms. O *did* communicate to all the parents in Lawrence's class to defend herself against Lawrence's accusations about a certain matter and this created distress for Lawrence because it had the effect of exposing him to potential ridicule. We agreed on all these matters and consequences had been given to Ms. O and she understood the consequences that would result should further such incidents occur. Lawrence and his mother nodded their heads.

I continued. The matters that turned out to be the greatest source of distress for Lawrence and produced the highest level of anger are Ms. O's grading and Ms. O's advice giving. The problem here is that in both cases, Lawrence has misunderstood and considers himself a victim where there appears to be no basis.

As for grading Lawrence claims that Ms. O graded him unfairly. In what way could it be unfair? The exam scores, for example, are completely consistent with a normal teacher range. (I demonstrated at this point with various graphs and visual supports the multiple ways in which Lawrence's exam grades could be compared to his classmates, his own performance in past years and measured against average BC students.)

Lawrence feels that girls are being favored over boys. Is this true? Not if you are talking about exam grades. In both Math and Science during year 10, boys got higher overall averages in Ms. O's class than girls did both in Math and Science. Lastly, when I reviewed a test that Lawrence wrote, graded by Ms. O, I found one reason that we might provide Lawrence with one extra mark. This is *not* to say that Ms. O's grading was wrong, but in the interest of being as fair

as possible we provided the additional mark. This made an upward difference of 3% on Lawrence's test. These are not alarming considerations and are in fact rather common. It is normal to negotiate grades in such a manner as Lawrence has with Ms. O.

In conclusion, we believe that Lawrence misunderstands and falsely blames Ms. O about his grades. Ms O's grading and methods look fair and reasonable. There is nothing we can hold against her, in fact compared to other teachers in other schools and at other times, her grades look quite competent.

As to the second matter that produces stress for Lawrence, he feels that it is Ms. O's fault that he dropped Chemistry from his educational plan and now it is too late to register for the course. He wishes for justice, by which Lawrence means some sort of penalty. What is not clear to Lawrence is that Ms. O has no power to determine what courses Lawrence is going to take. On the contrary we enable Lawrence's planning by providing the Planning 10 course. Last April he produced a list of courses he wanted. In September I told all grade 11 students not to change courses until they discuss it with their advisor, Ms. Yoo. Despite my explicit direction, Lawrence went ahead and dropped the course, without consulting the academic advisor.

What we worry about now is that Lawrence has such an emotional intensity about these issues that he is becoming quite incapable of functioning. With the note from the doctor we accept that Lawrence is incapable of being in Ms. O's class and we have been thinking about how we can help Lawrence. However, we need to be clear that we are acting out of the best interests of Lawrence and a proper understanding of the facts about Ms. O. We are not acting out of any need to make up for a failure on our part, rather we are trying to assist Lawrence in facing the true facts of his circumstances. Lawrence seems intent on achieving what he calls 'justice' but we believe he needs rather to accept his part in the circumstances he is presently facing.

During the entire time that I shared these results with Lawrence and his mother, Lawrence's mother frequently frowned at Lawrence. When I came to the conclusion of the matter, the mother and son both acquiesced. As a last point, I told Lawrence and his mother that for the sake of Lawrence, Ms. O voluntarily resigned from her position as of the end of December in order to demonstrate her intention that Lawrence not be unduly hindered by her presence at the school. We wished to keep this resignation confidential however as we felt that given Lawrence's issue with Ms. O had become widely known in the school and the other families quite like Ms. O, Lawrence would again risk isolation were Ms. O's resignation to become known. If rumour got out that Ms. O was resigning we would deny it and perhaps even rehire her.

Everything met with both Lawrence's and his mother's satisfaction. The meeting signalled the end of the matter. Lawrence returned to normal function and we no longer received threats from the mother or heard of any negative gossip in the parent community. I informed JJ of the outcomes of the meeting, and for the only time that I ever recall, he followed me out the door and behind my back he said to me "Good job! Thanks."

I have often reflected on this meeting and the power that facts had in bringing about a resolution. All the ranting that Lawrence did in the office the day of the box cutter had solely to do with his perspective on the matter. He had worked himself up into a quite frothy sense of injustice. During those three hours that I counselled him, I had only taken his point of view, taking the posture of counsellor displaying empathy with his interpretation while never granting that it was legitimate.

The follow-up meeting was quite different. I came on strong with the facts clearly sorted out in my mind. The facts, became a meeting ground between Lawrence's sense of injustice and

my sense as a principal that we all needed to find a way to get along. It was through facts that we found agreement and were able to come back to a sense of normalcy. Most of my life as a teacher and leader in the school I have often been antagonistic to these sort of cold calculations and desired rather that people be more generous to each other and make good will gestures recognizing that everyone has failings and move toward the future as best we can. This works well perhaps in religious settings where the subjective ideal of forgiveness predominates, but in the present case I saw the friendliness of facts. Lawrence had to bring his subjectivity into alignment with the objective world that we could all agree to. The resolution of the issue with Lawrence did much for his stability, but also that of the school. Over time, as Lawrence appeared much better adjusted we saw no reason to accept Ms. O's resignation and she remained with us.

Other than Lawrence, there were some new families in the younger grades that did not understand how BC schools work. An issue first came to my awareness after Aida received a phone call from the mother of Joo-won in first grade. She had observed the father of a first grader Ji-Young speaking with one of our second grade students Tan Jeon. Tan Jeon had supposedly been swearing at and teasing Ji-Young and the father decided to speak with Tan Jeon. The father, a former fighter pilot with the South Korean military and now a civilian pilot spoke calmly but firmly to Tan Jeon in the entrance area to our school. Tan Jeon gave some reply that the father of Ji-Young did not like and the father said in Korean, "If you do it again I will kill you."

When Aida relayed this story to me, I was at a loss. I spoke with the office staff and asked them if this was normal behaviour for parents in this culture. Both Aida and Jenny said it was not normal and were as distressed about it as I. The only natural outcome, I believed, was to

phone the police and let them handle it as a criminal matter of uttering threats to a minor but I was not sure I was on solid ground. Certainly, as I investigated the incident further I learned that there were both adult and child witnesses who saw the parent speaking this way to the child but I dared not make a move until I spoke with JJ. I did not wish to make a big visible cultural blunder. The problem was that JJ was in a meeting somewhere relating to his other businesses and was not answering text messages or phone calls from Aida as he usually did. Only later in the day did JJ respond and said simply that he would talk to me about it the following day.

Meanwhile I asked Markus, the grade 2/3 teacher, to be sure to escort Tan Jeon to the bus directly so as to prevent any further contact between Tan Jeon and the father of Ji-Young. The interesting thing about this is that after the father uttered his threat in the morning, Tan Jeon came to his class as if nothing happened. He showed no signs of distress nor did he act out in any way during the day. When the end of the day came and students were dismissed, Tan Jeon saw the father of Ji-Young, walked right past him, and didn't give a second glance. He seemed oblivious to the presence of the father who had threatened him earlier in the day. This was interesting to me and indicated that perhaps I had stumbled across a cultural matter.

Later that night at home I spoke to my Phunee my wife about the incident. She laughed and speaking out of her Thai background said "This is old style Asian culture. If you phoned the police probably no one would come to the school. They might just wonder why this foreigner is so excited."

The next day speaking with JJ, I learned the same thing, only he called it farmer culture. He said it is just a kind of rough talk and everyone knows that *I will kill you* only means *you will be in trouble*. JJ also said that no police would come to the school for such a matter. They would think it is funny. So, I heard what JJ and my wife were telling me. Clearly there was a cultural

issue at stake. Yet, at the same time, both of the office staff were members of the same Korean culture, and both spoke with their husbands at home who agreed that what the father had done was wrong and unheard of. Further, I notified Tan Jeon's parents of the incident. They often did not answer the phone so we text messaged them that a letter was sent which explained the entire matter and the parents did not reply. Many months later, the father of Tan Jeon dropped by with gifts for the teachers and principal but the earlier actions of the threatening parent were never mentioned. Apparently, it was of no serious matter.

I wrote a letter to explain clearly to the parent community that the only ones responsible for the discipline of the child at school were the trained and certified educators. No parent is responsible for, or allowed to discipline the child of another family. I also had opportunity to speak with the father who had uttered the threat and he apologized quite quickly about the matter and was eager to support the school in any way.

At the same time as we were confirming a sort of penitent support from father of Ji-Young, we had begun to notice a disturbance coming from the mother of Joo-won, the parent who originally reported the threats uttered by Ji-Young's father. It began in the early weeks of December when it was reported that she was talking to other parents about an incident that occurred in the playground earlier that week. It was being stated that Tan Jeon had pulled Joo-won's pants down in the playground. When I first heard of it, I noted it down, and intended to look into it. A matter that we had been insisting on is that if parents have an issue, they need to bring it to the teacher. If they are not satisfied, they need to raise the issue further with the principal. No one had spoken to me yet, so I was dealing with it as something that was probably going away by itself. However, as we have been learning, parents are highly reactive and will

start taking action before you are even aware there is a problem. It came to my understanding that the mother of Joo-won was in fact quite unsatisfied and was meeting with other parents each day to speak negatively about our school. I decided to go on the offensive.

Teachers by this point were all well aware that there was a situation with Tan Jeon but needed a kind of official statement from me. During a staff meeting, I explained to the teachers that parents come to our school because they have already lost faith in their own public school system. Never-the-less, the patterns of schooling they have been raised in do not go away easily, and many of them believe that a proper school is going to control, not manage or guide the social/emotional development of the students. I said that the incident with Tan Jeon however was an example of how we are doing things right at the school, not wrong and we needn't feel that we are operating deficiently simply because of the sense of dis-ease the mother is showing.

The first thing I pointed out is that there was a supervising teacher in the playground at the time, Ms. Edgar, who did not directly witness the event and Ms. Edgar watches like a hawk. This demonstrates that even with proper supervision, not everything will be seen or managed. Further, when the incident took place, one of the students who saw what happened sought out her own teacher Ms. Douglas to report the incident. Ms. Douglas, while not on duty at the time, never the less investigated the matter. She went to the teacher on duty, Ms. Edgar who thought rather that she was dealing with a pushing incident and the offender Tan Jeon already apologized. Joo-won seemed satisfied and they were already playing happily together. Ms. Douglas however wished to confirm and asked Joo-won if he had been crying because he had fallen down and Joo-won said yes. She further asked him if he was hurt, he said no. The real issue, despite all the professional attention remained masked and seemed resolved.

The story continued to surface that something more had taken place that day and so other teachers were solicited to speak with their students and it eventually came out that Tan Jeon pulled Joo-won's pants down in the playground. Tan Jeon did it in a fun way, laughing as he did so. When he saw that Joo-won did not like it, he pulled his own pants down just to show he meant no harm by it. He then went to pull down the pants of another student but that student said, "Don't do that! It's not good." So, Tan Jeon stopped.

The point here is that the students were not disturbed enough by it to speak with their homeroom teachers as they usually do when something bothers them and does not get resolved. We expect students to be assertive about what they like or do not like and that is exactly what they did. They asserted what they did not like, and Tan Jeon heard it clearly and he stopped. What this shows is that our efforts to teach children how to solve social issues amongst themselves has been successful in this case and the success shows against the backdrop of teachers being unable to control such issues themselves. As a result, the children have learned to stop offensive behaviour while at the same time avoiding any undue shame against the child who may merely have been acting out age appropriate sexual curiosity. Any heavy handed approaches to discipline such as parents might expect would have had the likely result of shaming or punishing the child for offending against adult sensibility and possibly only bring more attention to the matter and even repetition of the behaviour.

In this playground story, we had something to celebrate rather than feel embarrassed by. I shared with the teachers that they need to gain confidence from this incident and know that the patient work they are doing is paying off and when parents come to report issues to them, they need to speak with confidence regarding our methods. We need to explain in every way possible how we teach our students *through* their social experiences and that our expectations differ from

typical Korean expectations. We are not attempting to control negative behaviour and thus eliminate it from ever occurring, we are attempting to help children respond to negative behaviour in context and this can sometimes be messy and take time to make observable progress.

One of the messages I now frequently tell parents is that if their child complains about something another child is doing at school, the expectation we have is *not* that the child report it to his/her parent who then reports it to the teacher who is at that point expected to get to the bottom of the matter and mete out punishments. Rather, the child is expected to follow a basic protocol developed in the University of Victoria called WITS (<http://www.witsprogram.ca/>). W = Walk away if you don't like the behaviour. I – Ignore the behaviour. T = Talk it out and come to an agreement. Or finally, S = Seek help. This puts the onus on the offended child to take responsibility for his or her own feelings and to communicate them by word or action. This is to occur within the situation it first arose. If the child does this, he/she will have to distinguish between what is important or not important enough for reporting. If the incident is reported to the teacher, the facts are ready to hand for the teacher to quickly assess and respond to. The other noticeable improvement that following this protocol brings about is, that if it is adhered to, the child can no longer use complaint as a method of gaining power over another student, rather than trying to relate to, understand and compromise with the other student.

I wanted to explain this to Joo-won's mother but within the few days it took to become aware of and fully investigate what had happened, Joo-won's mother was already in an aggressive campaign with the parents claiming that the incident in the playground was just the tip of the iceberg and evidence that we take disabled students in our school. Since she had never come to us about the issue, but only chose to speak to the parent community about it, I was the

one who reached out to Joo-won's mother to address the issue of Joo-won and the pants pulling. She steadily avoided having a meeting with me choosing instead to continue speaking publicly of the various learning challenges she could observe among our students and did a kind of name and shame campaign which made many parents angry at both her and the school either because of embarrassment at having their children's learning disability named (rightly or wrongly) or out of embarrassment at being in a school with such disabled students.

I talked with JJ about the sudden aggression of Joo-won's mother and her constant badmouthing of the school. "It is like she is a sleeper cell suicide bomber" I told him. "It is as if she is in cahoots with Kyle."

"Yeah,... yeah" he replied thoughtfully.

I had to go. There were teachers waiting by the van to go home. "Let's talk about it tomorrow" I said as I packed up.

JJ took my thoughts to the office staff and as I departed I could hear him discussing the matter with them.

The next day when I came into the office, I asked Aida "Did you find out what is going on?"

Her first word to me was "Kyle..." and before she could finish I replied "I knew it! I told JJ last night that the parent was like a suicide bomber."

A few days later, Aida came to me and with a sombre look in her eyes asked "Did you hear about yesterday?"

"No, not yet. What's to hear?" I asked.

“The parents of the Parent Advisory Committee met mother of Joo-won” she said.

“Oh, yeah. Right. So how did it go?” I asked.

“The parents were very strict,” she said.

“Really! But what can they say?”

“They told her in no uncertain terms that the school is the way it is supposed to be and it is not going to change. They also told her this is the way they want it.”

“I see” I said. “So, that’s it? Why would she listen to the PAC? I mean, I could have told Joo-won’s mom that, and probably could have done it better.”

Aida, looked as if she needed to explain something foreign to me, but I interrupted and guessed “She is part of their community. If she doesn’t go along with them then she will be out, is that right?”

“Right” Aida replied. A pause hovered between us.

We both broke into laughter. I had several simultaneous thoughts which I verbalized.

“The thing is that we are giving the PAC a lot of power. They might later expect something from us that we cannot do but since they do this for us, we should do something for them.” I reflected some more “Well, I guess if they want the school to be the way it is right now then it is unlikely that we will be put in a compromising situation.”

Aida and I looked at each other. I laughed again. “It is amazing, I said. If that is the way it is... Why couldn’t I have just spoken with the mother? Oh, yeah... the relationships.”

“If you defended the school” Aida said, “Jae Young’s mother would just have more to say against the school...”

“But when the parents...” I started.

“Yes, when it is the parents, then she cannot get angry at the school” Aida finished. “That is why even JJ will not talk with her. He is nervous that she will blame the school or talk more about Kyle. But if her battle is with the parents, she might listen.”

“Quite a circus isn’t it?” Aida asked.

I told her that I think it is quite interesting. I am learning more and more that one needs to sail with the weather we are given and this is our weather. Huebner (1966) wrote about this many years ago when he said that “the conditions and design of the educational environment can never be brought completely under the control of any one individual or group of individuals, for the educational environment is a human environment” (Huebner, 1966, p. 168). I don’t think his words were given much regard from the larger educational milieu at the time as he anticipated precisely the struggle that would take place in the 70s over these fundamental concepts of control in the school, and his view by the end of the 70s took the back seat to those who assert the mechanistic view of constant and vigilant control.

“Wow.”

The following is a talk I gave at our fourth annual Christmas Gala.

A winter meditation

Welcome everyone. I trust you are enjoying this evening gala in which students at all levels are providing their contributions for us to celebrate the season as a community. I have been asked to share a little something at this juncture.

I have prepared a talk on some selected holidays celebrated at this time of year and found a number of commonalities. The first thing I noticed, as with most holidays, is there tends to be a religious significance to the season whereby religion acts as a repository for the meaning

contained within historical events. The second thing I noticed is that in December, the celebrations acknowledge the changing amount of daylight that occurs in December, especially the decrease in light. Third, this loss of light is a metaphor for losses of other kinds that we might experience during the changing seasons of life. And, finally this loss of light is contrasted with the hope of a changing day, in which the light eventually overcomes the darkness.

So, for example one of the most prominent themes in the Jewish celebration of Hanukkah is the ongoing struggle for liberation in the face of oppression. Hanukkah brings back to the Jewish mind the darkness of military oppression during which Syrian-Greeks forbade Jews to practice their religion, declaring mere identification as a Jew to be a crime punishable by death. The question of a strong identity and the freedom to express it therefore became central to the holiday of Hanukkah. Today, the holiday reminds Jews to rededicate themselves to stand against forces that would destroy their identity. We too, as a school can use this time to rededicate ourselves to learning and growing into a full life, both individually, and as families and together as a caring school community.

Another example is the celebration of Winter Solstice. Sun worship is one of the main pillars of all religions, especially older religions. Sun worshippers and nature religions held major celebrations at the Winter Solstice which symbolized the victory of the strength of the Sun over the forces of darkness that try to suppress it. From summer till now the strength of the sun has daily been diminishing and will continue to do so until about Dec 22 at which point, everything changes and the sun slowly begins to regain its power. Interestingly, all the following deities were said to be born on 25 December, according to their legends: Vishnu, Mithras, Osiris, Horus, Hercules, Dionysus, Tammuz, Indra, Buddha and Jesus.

Worldwide, interpretation of the event has varied across cultures, but many have held a recognition of rebirth. Winter days in many cultures past and present are oppressive and dangerous as many people risk starvation or succumbing to the elements. In this context Winter Solstice garners hope. Yes, the days have been getting darker, yes it has been getting colder, yes we are hungry and we worry about diminishing supplies, and many of us suffer from colds and fevers but from this time onward, we will get more light. It will not always be easy, and there are surely storms we have yet to pass through, but summer is coming. Therefore, since the wine and beer are finally fermented and ready, let's break open the kegs and celebrate the rebirth of the sun and its anticipated victory over darkness.

We too, need to be reminded in our own personal lives that darkness will never quench the light. Light eventually returns in full power. So also, with our families, and school communities such as ours, we will experience seasons of abundance and seasons of hardship and if it seems we are in winter now, we can know that summer is coming.

Finally, there is Christmas, a celebration which is perhaps closer to many of our hearts. Christmas is a story of an oppressed people living under the iron fist of Roman dictatorship. While many were waiting for a saviour in the form of a Captain who would lead the people out of oppression through military exploits, the saviour turned out instead to be a baby. But this baby was no ordinary baby. It was claimed that the all powerful maker of the universe himself came to earth in the form of this, the weakest of all humans; God, in the very biology of a human, born into poverty, weakness and shame. This story of Jesus' birth turned the concept of power on its head, and located power in weakness. Christmas is the celebration of a small, small light in overwhelming darkness which went on to change the world and ultimately conquer Rome. So too... personally, when we think of all that oppresses or threatens our children, our families and

our school community we may find the solution is not in fact the typical one. It will not be from a place we perceive as strength. The solution may actually be in that area we often mistake for weakness – our humanity.

I know you parents care for your children. All that you do for your children is a reflection of that. We too, working with your children grow very fond of their ways and nurture and support them in every way that we can. Our number one professional responsibility toward your children is not instruction, it is care. We are all partners in this process and to my way of thinking, it is this professional duty of care for all children that will be the light which brings increasing power into our lives and will take us to a bright and lovely spring.

I wish everyone a very happy and safe holiday and a pleasant evening.

The following day, at lunch Mr. Vernon told me he enjoyed the talk I gave at the Christmas performance.

“Really?” I asked. “I was wondering if I made any sense at all since I cut so much out of it.”

“No, it was really interesting. I did not know all that history. I especially liked the earlier part about Hannukah and Winter Solstice.”

“Well, T.S. Eliot once said that nothing written is ever new. Anything found in poetry can be recognized as echoes of similar things said or observed at various points earlier in history and thus when reading poetry, one hears the echoes of the past in each line one reads if one is sensitized to such things. For me, Christmas is much the same. When I celebrate Christmas I am not merely celebrating this year’s festivities, rather I am celebrating every Christmas I or anyone has ever experienced. Each small event has echoes of past Christmas’s and thus has more power

than the thing itself. For me, Christmas is not so much a holiday as it is poetry. So, this is why I really wanted Kanin to be present at the gala last week because I want to build a repertoire of memories for him. That includes all the good and the bad as well. It all adds to the richness of the event.”

“Wow, that is pretty profound. I don’t think too many fathers consider matters so deeply for their children. I think your son is quite lucky.”

“Well, thank you. Yeah, I guess it is different from what others think. I asked my wife for example what she thought, and being Thai, perhaps she was echoing the sentiments of many others. The first thing she commented was that she thought it was not polite for all the people to be clapping and cheering for the students while they danced.” Everyone at the table chuckled at this.

Mr. Haru jumped in and said “Oh yeah. When Star Wars opened in Japan the monitors thought the opening was not successful because the audience was so unresponsive. Yet when they were interviewed later, it turned out that they loved the movie.”

We all laughed. “Yeah, I guess a lot of people are just interested in externals such as whether or not the lighting was correct, or if the song selection was appropriate. For me, the holidays are not about any of this. In fact, the so called miscues are just as much a part of the event as the successes. It is all part of the poetry of the holiday.”

December 17, Thursday afternoon JJ came into my office. I said, “You want to talk about Lawrence?”

“No,” he said. “I just heard that all grade 8 will leave because of Celina. The parents have had enough because they do not believe the school is going to do anything. They think you have

failed them. You promised that you would not let Celina continue in her behavior and so they are going to leave.”

“But I have kept my promise” I replied. “Celina does not do the things she was doing last year, her negative behavior is largely diminished and she is progressing socially and emotionally and has even returned to her math class.”

“They don’t see it that way. They believe their children are suffering.”

“What suffering?” I replied. “I don’t see it. She doesn’t get reported to the office. We surveyed the teachers and they did not see her as being a bad student, nor even the worst in the class. We surveyed the students and nothing stood out.”

“Maybe you can get the teachers together and ask them.”

“I already have JJ. In the last three weeks I spoke with the teachers informally during a meeting. Then I gave the survey. I shared this information with you and it was all quite conclusive that there was no problem. What is going to be different if I ask them again? They all said what I just said. She is fine.”

“The office staff and the teachers say that you describe the myth of Celina is larger than the reality. Maybe you make the myth. Maybe everyone just follows your attitude, so they do not tell you. This is your problem. This is a leadership problem. They think you are Celina’s dad. You will not accept any negative words.”

“Which teachers? I can hardly imagine that I am unapproachable. I would think it is pure deception if people are not telling me. Besides, when I did the survey it was simple. Three questions. Rate from 1 – 5 the behavior of each student in the class on two variables. How much does each student contribute to the learning of the other classmates and the teaching of the teacher? And how much does each student detract from the learning of the other classmates and

the teaching of the teacher? And tell me any stand out stories for the year. How could I have possibly influenced those results through the sheer force of personality.”

I continued, “When people do complain to me about Celina, I ask them what she is doing wrong? They don’t really have an answer for me. It is something like, she is grumpy. Or, she leaves the room sometimes to cool down her anger before coming back in. These are not bad things, in fact it is part of her IEP. I can’t give her an out of school suspension for these matters and it is a far cry from last year when I began as a principal and she would take over the entire school and distract teachers and office staff from their work.”

“So, why do they tell you Celina is good but they tell me Celina is bad? This is the problem underneath the problem” said JJ.

“Yes, that is a problem. But, I am telling you JJ there is nothing to observe. Nothing gets reported. Classes are calm. You can walk into any class at any time of day and you will see it is fine.”

“Yes” he replied. “Even when I watch her, I notice she is not really with the others and sometimes she just looks grumpy, but that is all. Nothing so terrible. So, what am I going to do? If I am going to keep the school open, we cannot have those families leave. If they leave, that is three families. Then there is that crazy mother in grade one and the other child as well, that is five families. Surely after that we will lose 5 more families with them. I have failed. Tell me what I can do.”

I had to agree with him. When I first started, we had ten families in grade 8, now there are four. I thought for a little bit to JJ’s question and answered feebly – “Turn our weakness into a strength?”

“You mean we should make our school for disabled people?”

“No, I don’t mean that.”

“Ah...!” he said, exasperated. And out the door he went.

It was late in the day and I packed up. The teachers were waiting outside to go home.

That evening at 5:19, JJ called me. “Hi JJ” I answered.

“Yeah, its JJ” he replied. “I just finished talking with Celina’s mother. I told her about everything: about the parent’s complaint and that they might leave the school. I told her about the survey and what people are thinking. I explained to her that we might have to make the discipline policy more strict.”

There was silence. I said, “Possibly.”

“Anyway, I said we might have to. And if we make the discipline policy more strict Celina will surely be hurt the most by this. So... Celina’s mother decided she would pull Celina out from the school.”

“I understand” I replied. In my mind, I knew this would happen. It had to happen. In order to save the school, we had to sacrifice the student. Our school, in my mind has always been in critical care; 24 hour supervision. If we lose any students, we lose the school. If we lose the school then we cannot do anything for any students such as Celina in the future. And there is a poison in our school, a kind of gangrene. The blood is simply not doing its work to remove the poison and that poison is social prejudice against disability. Neither JJ nor I were able to diminish it. We had to cut off the hand to save the body. Pure and simple. “JJ, I don’t know if you need to hear this but for me this is a business decision and I understand this. I could not make this decision as a principal, but I understand why you made this decision and I will not say anything negative about you to the other teachers, I just want you to know that.”

“Ok” he replied. “Celina’s mother decided this was best for her daughter.”

“I know. I get it. But we are still going to have to talk about the problem underneath the problem. That still needs to be addressed.”

“Yes,” said JJ.

“All right. Thanks.”

“Yeah, bye.”

I reflected on the problem underneath the problem. It was not, as JJ said, that I was favoring Celina so much. The problem underneath the problem was that JJ was getting his information from office staff and the two Korean teachers. It was the entire Korean contingent, parents and staff, who could not accept Celina.

After picking up the teachers the next morning, I announced early on that Celina would no longer be coming.

Faye, who as the art teacher, also held the special education portfolio, replied “You mean she won’t be in today.”

“No, I mean she will no longer be attending our school” I replied.

“You mean she was kicked out?”

“Well, not exactly. The mother pulled her out.”

“So, when did you hear about it?”

“JJ called me last night.”

“You mean he kicked her out?”

“No, they had a meeting. They were going to talk about tuition fees but JJ discussed the issues we have been having at the school and the threat of all the parents wanting to pull out. The mother decided to pull Celina out.”

“It is a business decision” I continued. “It was either Celina or the entire 8th grade. It had to happen. If we do not have a school, we have no opportunity to create anything of value like we have done with Celina for the last year and a half. If Celina stayed, she would be the only 8th grade student and you can be sure there would be no one else after that.”

“So, will her mother be coming in today? Will I be able to see her?” Faye asked.

“I doubt that she is going to be in today.”

“Maybe I can call her. Can I call her?”

“Sure, why not?”

That morning, I kept within the office. I just didn't want to meet anyone or say anything. I distributed all the Christmas cards I had written with the luggage tags I had purchased inserted into the envelopes. The tags were made in Korea and cost roughly five dollars a piece. Not too bad for twelve gifts. Each card had a personal message and a favorite quote of mine. As I was completing the final touches, I heard a voice at the door lightly saying “Hello.”

I turned, it was Celina's mom. She was carrying a bunch of gifts for the teachers. It included cake, cookies, coffee and juice.

I stood immediately. “Oh, hello,” I said. I stood with my hands folded in front of me. “I bought these some time ago and wanted the teachers to have them” she said, continuing to speak softly. She scurried to find a place to set all the bags and boxes.

“Thank you” was all I said. I came around my desk. I had just replied to an email she had sent earlier that morning saying she knew that Faye and I were not involved in this decision so I knew she was not in my office to blame me or have a fight. She looked resigned.

After she set the things down, she raised her face to me and looked at me directly. I tilted my head ever so slightly to invite anything she might wish to say. Her face looked flush like a peach with sudden patches of orange. Her eyes were dark wells. I said nothing, and moved slightly forward extending my hand. She waved me off covering her mouth, forced a feeble smile and disappeared."

A few minutes later I thought I would check to see if she was talking to Faye in her room across the hall. Faye was alone in her class so I informed her “Celina’s mother was just here.” “Can I see her?”

“I think she left already.”

“Did she seem all right?”

“I don’t think so. She didn’t seem capable of discussing anything.” At that point, tears welled into my eyes, I choked up and left to go to my office. If someone somewhere thought that I was Celina’s father, then I definitely could not show emotion now.

Later the same morning while sitting at my desk, I saw some of the PAC members walk past my door into the meeting room next door. It was the final day of school before the Christmas break. Apart from the issue with Celina, the upcoming holiday brought a feeling of lightness to the air and parents exuded a kind of victorious positivity dropping off gifts of good will for the staff with cookies, cake, and juice distributed on various desks in the office and friendly amicable chatter. I saw a tall slim mother walk past me into the PAC meeting. She

waved and smiled as she passed but I was stuck in unknowing. I knew I should know her, but I could not recall. Aida, likewise, was heading into the conference room. I stopped her.

“Aida, you need to help me. Who was that lady who just walked by, it seems I should know her?”

“Oh, that is the mother of Daniel in grade eight, Ms. Han. She is joining the PAC.”

“Oh, really” I thought. How is it, that the day after Celina is removed, Daniel Han’s mother joined the PAC? She is one of the same mothers I was told was going to leave.

The door to the conference room shut but the chattiness and laughter could be heard through the walls for a good hour. I could not do much work. All I could think about was the awkwardness of this situation. Is it possible that the parents are celebrating a victory? Are they talking about Celina right now? They perhaps believe the problem has been solved. It has not. The crazy mother who pointed out that we have so many needy students, was actually right, yet no one wants to admit it. Of course, she herself was needy so we could not tolerate her either.

So, the more I think about this, the more I feel we have an irresolvable dilemma and this is exactly the sort of thing I hope to be good at. This is the leadership challenge. How am I going to approach this?

Dorothy Sayers says the following “Perhaps the first thing that we can learn from the artist is that the only way of ‘mastering’ one’s material is to abandon the whole conception of mastery and to co-operate with it in love: whosoever will be lord of life, let him be its servant. If he tries to wrest life out of its true nature, it will revenge itself in judgement, as the work revenges itself upon the domineering artist” (Sayers, 1987, p. 186).

And, Peterson says “St. John’s vision trains us to re-see Christ in whatever terms are necessary to affirm his centrality in *this* time and place among *these* people” (Peterson, 1988, p. 40).

So, what exactly is the problem? How can I frame it? What terms are necessary for me to see redemption from this dilemma? To me it is simple. BC educators are to teach inclusion and diversity, while the parents wanted exclusion and uniformity. While we see it worthwhile for students to face a minimal amount of suffering so that they may learn inclusion and diversity, parents are thinking that this will take away from their children’s math and science. Their children may suffer from their studies to the point of suicide and an international ranking that places Korea last in terms of the happiness of their children, but Korean children should definitely not suffer from any social challenges in the classroom. On this matter, things are quite clear.

Further, the concept of being special needs is akin to being contagious with SARS. Nobody wants to be remotely associated with a learning disability when everyone is busy trying to gain higher marks than their neighbour, in the best schools, so they can have the best future. It is all about being associated with the highest quality anything, and to be identified in any way as bearing any kind of abnormality whatsoever is to be exposed as deficient. The problem is so pervasive that out of twenty universities in Korea our special education teacher Faye could only find one professor who was an educational psychologist. It seems common knowledge that even doctors are involved in a conspiracy of silence when it comes to special needs students. JJ tells me that in Korea if someone has special needs the normal thing to do is just let the student pass the high school courses and then even complete the university courses and be given merely a passing grade throughout but then not really gain any meaningful employment after that. The

point is to save the face of the child and the family involved. It is a sign of respect not to isolate the student as being different from the rest.

So, how to respond to this? I have been telling JJ that about twenty percent of our students should likely be on an IEP. He has troubles believing this. I tell him that our school is naturally attracting such students because they don't fit into the normal category and while Korea provides educational services for students on the far end of the special needs spectrum, there is very little in the middle. We are that middle. But JJ doesn't seem ready to buy what I am selling.

If I think of this school as a body, then I think we cut the hand to save the body, but we need to inject medicine so that there will be no more spread of gangrene. What we did was with Celina was right, but it was devastating. We no longer have the hand. What are we going to do as we move forward so as to save the body and stop the spread of gangrene? We need to think about our own medical practice, we need to think about how to help parents understand our BC and Canadian perspective on diversity and we ourselves need to know it as well.

In search of answers I found myself going through old quotes. I follow with my reflections in bold.

“We fear the darkness of our soul's inner regions because we are so polarized. Just as we polarize the world outside us, we polarize the world within. We feel that we must be all light with no darkness, that we must be perfectly clear with no confusion. Instead, what we really need is reconciliation...” (Bradshaw, 1992, p. 259). **[So... our response to the mystery is to try to black and white everything, define what is acceptable what is not acceptable and create categories. But that creates this inner darkness which we then fear. Is it possible that**

Celina, and not just Celina but also the mother who identified the learning needs, the disabled had ignited a fear within parents and JJ as well, of being identified as deficient?]

“The first stage of recovery (of one’s true self) is the recovery of the will power and for this one needs to realize choice. We choose the trance we fall under, and we can choose to come out of it” (Bradshaw, 1992, p. 259). **[The same might be said of a school community.]**

Bradshaw says that when he gave up seminary he began to drink the most. Being as vulnerable as he was triggered his “sense of shame and powerlessness. It activated childhood memories involving fear and confusion” (Bradshaw, 1992, p. 260). **[Is that what Koreans feel when they are faced with a Celina, a sense of shame and powerlessness? It certainly seemed so whenever I spoke with JJ trying to indicate to him that we are going to attract students who do not fit the normal student profile. It is natural.]**

“A lot of the time we don’t want to know all of ourselves our more ignoble motives, our greedy desires, our participations in the stoning of Stephens. But only if we can accept ourselves, our flaws as well as our virtues (and we’re all a grab bag of good and evil, and by and large can’t tell which is which) do we become useful servants of our art, of our LORD” (L’Engle, 2001, p. 153). **[So, have I somehow participated in the stoning of Celina by telling JJ I would not say anything negative about him, by saying that this is a business decision, by saying we cut off the hand to save the body? Would it have been better to take a stand? Would my resignation have stopped the removal of Celina, and would it not simply help destroy the school? Is it better to let such destruction take place as a lesson to those who would make such unjust demands? Or, do we think long term and keep on making baby steps in the right direction.]**

“The role of the artist is exactly the same as the role of the lover. If I love you, I have to make you conscious of the things you don’t see” (L’Engle, 2001, p. 165). **[And the lover and artists are prophets. It is my role to try to awaken awareness of this problem in the school. Do I need to be awakened to things I do not see?]**

“Credibility in creativity is a hard lesson to learn... No matter how true I believe what I am writing to be, if the reader cannot also participate in that truth, then I have failed... The artist seeks that truth which offers freedom, and then tries to share this offering” (L’Engle, 2001, p. 173). **[A true prophet or artist needs to awaken the consciousness of his/her audience in a manner that is empathetic and inclusive. That means, if I am to break through against prejudice, I need to be able to gain the parents participation. This involves more than just declaring right and wrong and setting policies in place.]**

“We don’t know. We can only make guesses, and our guesses may be wrong. Far too often in this confused world we are faced with choices, all of which are wrong, and the only thing we can do in fear and trembling, is to choose the least wrong, without pretending to ourselves that it is right” (L’Engle, 2001, p. 181).

“We are, then, dealing here once again with the awareness... that things can never be evaluated absolutely but are ambiguous. Even the most established experiences can be confronted at any time with something which contradicts them... if one faces up to it and allows it a place in one’s system of knowledge, then behind the paradox, that is behind the apparent abnormality, a new pattern can be discerned” (Von Rad, 1972, p. 128). **[What is this new pattern?]**

Chapter 8 – Breakthroughs

One of the things I am quite proud of as a Canadian is the degree to which the Canadian government and the aboriginal inhabitants of the land have attempted to right the historical wrongs that have been committed against the aboriginal populations. Progress is slow, and hundreds of aboriginal claims against the Canadian government are still in the courts making final resolution of all these claims seem a far off dream but it has to be granted that significant matters have been resolved including major land settlements that include mineral and fishing rights as well as recognition of limited self governance. In addition, the BC curriculum gives honour to aboriginal perspectives on a variety of topics in Science, Social Studies and other subjects with regular references to information relevant to an Aboriginal context. I am proud of this in the same way that I am proud of the fact that nearly 25% of all Canadians are foreign born and in Vancouver and Toronto the number of foreign born residents jumps to nearly 50% (Hussain, 2013). There are over 200 different foreign languages spoken in Canada and despite this, Canadians generally do not complain about our multicultural status, rather we boast about it. Next to the constitution, according to one survey, multiculturalism is something of which we are most proud. This stands in stark contrast to the Italians, Spanish, British, many Americans and others who claim that the multiculturalism project has failed.

Despite my pride in our social successes, I recall the day my first wife and I went to the movie *Dances with Wolves* (Wilson & Costner, 1990) which started late one summer evening in the old theatre at Regina Inn located in the core of the city. The theatre was in the basement which smelled musty with its grey, carpet covered walls, but being one floor down had the advantage of removing you from the summer heat. By the time the previews were over it was about 10 pm when I saw the early bloody scene of a white man getting his scalp removed from

his head with a hard scraping sound, like spooning a coconut, by a native of the prairie. It was a disturbing scene and I was uncomfortable watching it so I looked away. As I did so, my eyes adjusted to the dark and I noticed that sitting around us in close proximity, were all first nations people, eating popcorn and drinking coke. I wondered what they were thinking as the scene demonstrated the clear dominance of the prairie native despite the white man's express terror and suffering. At the conclusion of the movie my wife and I exited out the long dark hallway and quickly down the alley to our car, both of us silently suspicious we were being shadowed.

A similar thing happened to me during my stay in North Carolina several years ago. I had moved to that part of the world from west coast of British Columbia and in an attempt to fit in I joined a reading group as I had for many years in Canada. Their current discussion centered on a book called *A Lesson Before Dying* (1993) by Ernest Gaines in which themes of race, prejudice and injustice loom large. It was part of the *One City, One Book* promotional campaign which I was delighted to join. The book was a good read and I also attended the play. When I arrived at the discussion group in the library, I noticed at once that everyone there was black, except me. Discussion inevitably turned to the troubles that the white people had perpetrated on the blacks and all I could feel at that time was the strongly suppressed desire to say "I am from Canada. Where I was born I didn't even see any black folks, let alone get into a disagreement with them. Believe me, I hear your story with naïve innocence." I did not say any such thing however, as I felt that defending myself in the face of black indignity seemed completely out of place. But the incident awakened me to my new context and I didn't like my position in it. In that group I was the minority, representing the majority of the problem.

Perhaps a year later as I began to date a black woman, matters didn't much improve. Amara is Jamaican and likewise did not identify with black American struggles, but those around

us did not seem particularly capable of accommodating our different, non-American background. When we went to the Black Theatre Festival together in Winston Salem, it was remarkable to me that in a festival filling the streets with late night cafes and crowds wandering among candle lit tables, hardly a soul was white. White absence bothered me, but even among some blacks I had the sense I was intruding. I was startled to hear a few young black men make the comment of my girlfriend “Couldn’t she have found a brother?” Beyond this single incident, we frequently sat in restaurants together where white folk would stop eating and talking and just stare at us as if that very moment we had just poured beer on their dinner. On many occasions after reviewing the menus, I looked up and some tables were still frozen in that same non-eating expression – staring, at us! Amara told me on a few occasions, “Don’t make a scene.”

In both of these cases, among the aboriginals of Canada and the blacks (and whites) of the US, I felt a kind of outsider status that is only representative of the worst case of all. Worst, I mean, because there was no way to escape my family: the original context of my life history. I grew up in a home of young mother whose near relatives where involved in a fairly extreme religious sect that taught the doctrine that sin in the garden of Eden was committed by the woman who permitted the serpent to have sex with her. It was the woman’s sexuality (or the pleasure of carnal knowledge generally) that was to blame for all the pain and suffering we now experience in this world. Those who believed this message are called believers. They are said to be pre-selected by divine destiny to spend eternity in glory. Those who did not believe, could not help their unbelief as they were literal descendants of the serpent himself; physical progeny of Lucifer the devil and his consort Eve, here on our planet - genetically determined. They had no choice in the matter. I made the choice to be a believer, and thus escape the choice-less choice of damnation, at least for a time. The bitterest pill I swallowed during that time was the belief that it

was wrong for me to be attracted to a woman, unless she was my wife. I was still twelve, so I had to wait a while. I worked hard to avoid such devilish temptations but mostly this led to vigilant suppression of my own adolescent emotions and body, and constant self-shaming.

There was turbulence in my upbringing so I spent nearly a year living with my aunt and uncle. My uncle was a leader in this particular religious organization and I got to see how it operated from inside his home. Many people who had a rough start in life, found value in his guidance and went on to live quite successful lives, raising families, owning homes and cars; travelling the world. I admired my uncle very much and wanted to be like him. However, soon things took a turn and I was back at home with my mother, who was now living with a new man and his children. I went from an environment of deep care mixed with a formally misogynistic attitude toward women, to an environment that was completely separated from any larger community, devoid of the care and warmth I had become accustomed to at my aunt and uncles' yet more formally respectful of the role of women as my mother was a feminist and my step father agreed in principle. What stayed with me, in both of these homes, my aunt and uncle's and my mother's, was the lack of decent understanding between genders - though I can say the religious group seemed a far sight happier, enviable even.

I asked my mother one time, if she believed that women were inherently better than men and if the fact that there are far more men in prisons than women is just evidence of this. She did not disagree with my statement, though she could not bring herself to affirm it. She rarely spoke of my blood father but when she did I slowly came to the realization that she was terrified I might turn out to be like him. I came over time to believe that turning out like him meant – being a man. When I got married the first time, I had hoped that I would get shelter from the silent but persistent accusation that my very existence is what brought harm to people. Surely my wife

would be someone who could take an empathetic view of my position. Yet, it turned out, that such was only possible if I could just learn to listen. I was perplexed. I felt myself to be, in the most general sense, an honest, helpful, cooperative, and reasonable person, yet no matter what I did to try to progress forward in this life, I somehow lost the argument before I began. I seemed, in the eyes of the aboriginals in the movie theatre, the blacks in the book club, my mother and my first wife, to be the embodiment of everything that is wrong in the world. Of course none of these people would ever confess to thinking in such stark terms, but I certainly felt it. Whatever my words or deeds were, no matter my true intent, I felt as if I was seen through a distorted lens. I often had to endure polite and friendly explanations about what, if it needed explanation, I would never understand. Yet, how was it that I so clearly knew where their conversations ended? Who was it that seemed incapable of listening?

In a dream once, I was talking to someone and the devil (a handsome, elegantly polite, but short man) somehow manipulated the frequency of my voice. modulating it just enough that the message, when it arrived in the ears of my listeners, had been completely removed of the original content. I felt, as Madeleine L'Engle said once that a book is not complete until someone reads it (L'Engle, 2001). Like an unread book, I was not recognized for who I was, rather I was allocated to a pile based on my cover – white male – and thus incomplete.

I often heeded my uncle's advice to find and enjoy solitude. I was the one who grieved over the cricket appearing to struggle with the poisons burning through his body as a result of the pesticide on our front lawn. I was the child who walked alone in fields amazed at the miracle of growing grass, whistling in reply to birdsong at the edge of the city where I would ride my bike and feel the breeze on my cheek while observing distant storm clouds blackening the far horizon. I was picked on during my middle and high school years, bullied quite mercilessly in fact. I am

not sure why. Was I too short? Was I too quiet? How about too gentle? “Why do you always take the side of the underdog?” my step father once asked. “Its really irritating!” Yet, I myself was vilified in every social group in which I attempted to make a connection. I think more than any other reason this is why I have turned to Asia in my search for a life partner. I seem to face no negative assumptions for being either white, or a man. I feel taken as who I represent myself to be. Asian men and women read my story as I intend it. When I speak, I feel heard. I think this has helped me regain some balance of perspective and it has broadened my social horizon.

And, lest I be misunderstood, I am *not* making any claim to any form of perfection. I am well aware of at least a selection of my failings, and more aware as I get older. I am sure as I continue this autoethnography, I will learn more about my dark side. I can be an ass. On my own time, I have a tendency to demonstrate little regard for social propriety. I am not claiming any kind of superiority. I am claiming outsider status, something imposed rather than chosen. Despite this, I have not read much about any of the isms: feminism, racism, agism, heterosexism. I have avoided these because much of what I have seen from the politicization of relationships is a hardening of the edges in various forms of extremism or simply my own sense of shame for merely representing the offense that others have experienced.

I am not saying that my choice to avoid the isms is the correct choice. If anything the position I have taken is a defensive posture, a means of finding respite from the tensions that have arisen in a variety of circumstances that I feel have somehow gone astray. Yet I am also trying to point out that even such worthy aims as basic equality are often translated into parodies and instead of achieving the noble aims they aspire for, result rather in new assertions of superiority. Politics becomes fragmented as people look more and more to their own well being (Taylor, 1991) resulting in an ironic decrease in political resistance. My entire purpose in this

dissertation has been to find a neutral ground between two opposing claims thus strengthening the claims of both. One reason grounding this purpose is I want to avoid the polarizing rhetoric that can accompany too vigorous a defense of one's justifiable claims, something readily evident in modern politics around the world. One should never interpret my words to mean that I am against any movement that has a fundamental goal toward equality. My strategy in life and in this dissertation, is to address these very issues but less directly than I have often experienced. It is an operational preference. As Emily Dickinson once so famously phrased it "Tell all the truth but tell it slant - , Success in Circuit lies, Too bright for our infirm delight, The truth's superb surprise" (Dickinson, 1998). Why should it be that bold, clear and forceful be the admired strategies for provoking and defending the essential equality of all?

Somewhere along the way early in life, I grew to resent any occasion that anyone said "You can't do that." It might go all the way back to my childhood days when I thought I was magic and met with profound disbelief. I can remember occasions when my mother said "Oh, you can't do that" and I consequently set out to prove her wrong. Whenever such a statement came my way, no matter who said it, I had a deeply visceral reaction inside. It was like an offense to my integrity. If someone else can do it, why can't I? Like an offense against logic. How can anyone know what is or is not possible until it has been tried? Possible just means there might be something we yet need to learn. This is basic humility in the face of a life of mystery. Imagining possibilities is my basic human right, my existential liberty. Of course, I was pretty young to be thinking such thoughts but the emotional impulse was there.

The opposite of this free imagination is the feeling of compulsion that I must do this or that thing, behave in this or that way. I already mentioned the Saturday morning that my

stepfather cleaned the house and I decided to never, ever do anything out of compulsion the way my stepfather did, totally destroying a pleasant Saturday morning.

I used to get so stressed about doing anything. The thought of raising my arm to wash my hair was sometimes overwhelming. Work was too toilsome to tell. Only until I was able to turn work into an act of compassion, an act of giving for goodness or charity was I able to break out of the sheer inertia I felt. I learned that when I did anything out of a desire for service or to help, then somehow the work was less burdensome and I was able to take on more and more and more responsibility. Perhaps this is what Parker Palmer (1990) means when he distinguishes between those who are trapped in a world of external stimuli, like my step father responding to his own need to feel responsible, in a knee jerk (emphasis on *jerk*) fashion, furiously vacuuming the house and those who allow compassion to make the quality of their action responsive to needs rather than mere reflexes. On the contrary, I have the attitude that if ever things get too tough, I can always vacate. There is nothing requiring me to remain in the situation I am in, or fill any checklist, or fear for anyone's judgement. I just choose not to abandon my task, out of the same sense of giving and charity that got me in that position in the first place. Every moment, is another moment of choosing to remain in that place where I give of myself. It is this attitude of volunteerism, a doing for the sake of un-obliged generosity rather than necessity, that enables me to assume the responsibilities of leadership. I am reminded of a question someone asked Mary Rose O'Reilley "How do you distinguish between your position and complete irresponsibility?" (O'Reilley, 2000, p. 312). I think it is a great question and points to exactly the paradox of leadership for me.

So, on the one hand, don't tell me what I cannot do. On the other hand, don't tell me what I must do. At least, that is the orientation with which I have looked upon the external world for the largest part of my life. It produced some conflicts for me.

We received an email from a new parent on Friday morning, mother of Joon-Ho. The email this mother sent was like many such emails we have received several times before and the message was the same. Some child already among our student population was doing something naughty. There was swearing involved. There had also been some pushing and a certain amount of sand being thrown or kicked. Names were mentioned. I moved into action right away.

I spoke with the teacher who might know the most about these circumstances, and tried to get the big picture. Mr. Markus Bergin was well up to speed and we talked each issue through. I wrote a response and brought it to Markus as soon as I was able. As I came down to the classroom to speak with Markus, I saw our two office staff standing by the library entrance. They both had their arms wrapped closely around their bodies and looked as though they were waiting to find out if their relatives arrived safely from some stormy passage at sea. I took a look at them, lowered my voice and asked "What is going on?" I used that, slightly irritated *there is mischief afoot* voice and they told me that JJ was talking with the accused boy to try to scare him. I paced back a few steps, felt the redness move up my back and I asked "JJ is doing just what we tell the parents not to do! And, how do we know the boy is even a problem? JJ is acting on an uninvestigated complaint made by a child to a parent and, like the parent, is assuming the story is accurate! I am so mad I would like to throw my pen through this window." I was performing anger as I have often performed it for children in the past. I experienced the physical feeling of

anger but it seemed more like a play where I attempted to convey the appropriate emotion. I needed to get across that this is not the territory we should be moving into.

I returned to my office hardly able to contain myself as I prepared to let JJ have it. Not being able to settle my energy, I popped my emails open and read something by JJ about this situation. He wrote that he was really worried we were going to get more of this kind of parent and that he wanted to have a meeting with me. So, I prepared myself inwardly to meet him. I wanted to show him my disapproval, but I did not want my anger to be unbridled. I knew if I came in that way I would be ineffective. It took me about five minutes of pacing before I made my way down the steps from my office and then across the way to his.

JJ was sitting at his desk. “Yeah” he said, as soon as I entered. I came and sat in front of him, steadying myself for an onslaught of blame and accusation and some wild fantasy of a plan to manage this parent or the ‘offending’ child.

I sat in front of him. “So... I got your email.”

“Yes, I took Tan Jeon and had a conversation with him.”

“I know.” I spoke as neutrally as possible, with a tinge of *don’t push me on this one*.

“We are starting to get new parents at the school and I am sure we are going to face this situation again. Some parents come here and they very quickly complain that their child gets mistreated or that we don’t watch our students enough.”

“So, we should kick Tan Jeon out?” I say.

“No, we can’t kick Tan Jeon out” he replied. “Kids are not going to be perfect.”

“Exactly. They will never have this kind of dining room politeness.”

“I know that. They are kids. They are going to misbehave and part of their learning happens as they make these mistakes and live through them. I know that. But what are we going to do? I am very worried you know.”

“Right. Tan Jeon is not a bad kid. He actually likes people. He wants to be friendly. But he just does things that are socially inappropriate. He is not a bully.”

“I know. You know... but, I am really afraid” he said. “The last time we had a complaint like this we lost two parents. We have to do something.”

“But at least one of those parents was quite bad. She was a definite liability to the school. I continued “Such parents are not an asset. And if this parent doesn’t like what we do it is no use pandering to her. The longer she stays the more of a problem it is for us.”

“The problem is,” he said looking at me. “I don’t know what to do.”

“Neither do I” I said to him as I began to consider what we could do.

We seemed to be on the same page. JJ was really at the end of his rope and was now at the place I had secretly been hoping to arrive at. No longer is he telling me or showing me how things should be done, instead he is appealing for me to help him where he was at a loss. JJ had begun to make breakthroughs in his initiation rites as school owner, which meant he began trusting his principal.

So, what should be done?

We could follow the model of the American school where I once taught in North Carolina. There was no recess and lunch time was conducted under strict supervision, but a plan such as this would go quite against the BC model. We cannot control all student behavior nor do we wish to. Children need exercise, they need to mix with students who are different from them and exhibit behaviors that are different.

There was additional background to consider. After the incident with Celina, I had approached JK telling him that I felt the problem beneath the problem is that Koreans have a much different expectation of students and school than Canadians. As a result there is an expectation gap and this creates frustration. We need to close the gap by letting parents know our differences early in their experience of school before they have time to get upset. I offered to hold orientation meetings for new parents every two months to explain how things are different in the BC System and we did our first orientation just a week ago.

Given this background, I explained to JK that at the conclusion of the orientation meeting I told the parents that our number one professional obligation was to care for their children. If they had any doubt about our care, they should contact us and let us know. And, this is exactly what mother of Joon-Ho did. This shows that we have radically shortened the response time of frustrated parent. The mother is coming to us rather than gossiping among other parents. I shared with JJ that he needs to let me speak to the parent. We already know she is responsive. Let me give her an explanation about culture shock, and if it turns out that she just does not like what I share with her, then we really don't want her as the conflicts will never go away. It is time he let me do my job. JJ agreed and a meeting was set up.

We were in Brant's room for a staff meeting recently, where he had the heater set to thirty degrees, quite hot. Early in the agenda we reviewed the first professional standard for teachers (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2012) being the teacher's care for students. Included in this standard is the indication that teachers keep student confidentiality except when that information is required by law. So I asked teachers what they felt it meant to keep

confidence. There were various responses. The first one that Aurore put forward, I liked especially: Confidence should be kept about matters concerning some and not others.

So, the discussion was fine and interesting until we came to the place where I wanted to narrow it down specifically in terms of school. What should we keep confidence about? First, Kirsten said “Something that is given in confidence.” I wrote that on the board. Faye added, “Anything that goes to the counsellor.” In fact, the American web pages I read indicate that anything that takes place in the counsellor’s office should not even go into the main office files. BC requires that we put IEP’s in the student file and student files are accessible to teachers, so we cannot follow that. I added, that of course, it should go without saying that staff meetings are spoken in confidence. However, it wasn’t until Kasey spoke up that I was caught unawares. He said that the discussions they had at university concluded that *every* conversation should be based on an assumption of confidence. I was aghast!

“How can anyone do that?” I asked. “What would you talk about then? TV?”

“Yeah, I can give an example of that right now” Kirsten piped in. “Kasey was telling me just this afternoon that he likes gaming. So, I turned around and I knew that Lonnie in my class liked gaming so I said “Did you hear that Mr. Haru likes gaming? You might want to join him sometime.” Apparently Lonnie went to Kasey shortly after that and asked him which games he likes and Kasey wondered how Lonnie found out about this. Guilty! That was me, I told Lonnie. I didn’t know this was private information.”

“Did you know that in Thai culture it is commonly accepted that family and friends will discuss your sex life?” I piped in. “Nothing is private in Thai culture. Even the most personal. But they do not consider this an intrusion and they intend it as a form of inclusion. If we love

you, we will talk about you.” I looked for a response but all I could see was the staff gazing into their own individual spaces.

Eventually I had to table this issue. I was hoping to establish some norms for collaboration but had not anticipated the direction this conversation went. I wasn't sure how to move forward because it seemed that such a practice of keeping every conversation confidential would be a hindrance rather than a help to collaboration. As I thought about it later, I decided that next staff meeting I would put the items that teachers raised in the last meeting regarding confidentiality in a list and have the teachers score them – including the confidentiality that may be applied to every conversation. Maybe 1 to 5 for example, 5 being the best. Then if we get 80% in favor, we will adopt these as agreed upon interpretations of the professional expectation that we will keep confidence. This discussion is important as it relates to the professional standard of care for students, but also assumptions about how we communicate as a team.

As I reflected further on the staff discussion, something became quite apparent to me. The first is that keeping confidentiality is something highly prized in the West but something not so valued in the Asian South at least. I mentioned already that my wife and her Thai culture do not have any sense of this confidentiality and I have frequently heard the complaint that Koreans cannot keep confidence. I am not bothered by such matters. Rather, I find these to be curious diversions. However, if I were working in BC schools back in Canada and I advocated for more openness, I fear that my views would be suspect. In my experience, there is a conservative tendency in Canada. If something is described as a professional norm, Canadians tend to take the most restrictive view of it. Those who do not follow the norm of confidentiality then are not seen merely as deviations, but offenders against social expectation. It points out how norms of

behavior becoming institutionalized over time become more and more difficult to raise challenges against. To use Habermasian terminology, what began as a lifeworld product, over time becomes part of the system. The communication patterns depart from agreement arrived at from the unforced force of the best argument to non-communicative forms of sanction requiring compliance. Less and less deliberation is allowed, being replaced rather by efficiency of supervision. Or, as Bourdieu would say speaking of ordinary people caught in the bind of (among other things) “the merciless sanctions of the school system” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 201) in which “external reality ... inhabits and haunts them, possesses them from the inside, and dispossesses them of initiative in their own existence in the manner of the monster in *Alien*” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 201). The following postmodern perspective might begin to elaborate a solution: “Given the radical pluralisation of contemporary society, one person’s utopia is another’s idea of hell... As such, the best avenue is to enshrine the two meta-values of freedom and equal life-chances for all, and to give people the latitude and capacity to visualize their own utopias” (Gardiner, 1997, p. 111).

But how does such an approach take place in the real world? Certainly, I can say, the situation I work in now offers more liberty to debate matters such as the meaning of confidentiality than what I might find in either a solely Korean or solely Canadian context. In our school we are able to, in fact we must, revisit our assumptions because distinctions of culture force us to it and the clarity of difference between Canadian and Korean cultures remind us of the general differences that exist between all of us. Snyder, Acker-Hocevar & Snyder (2008) describe a philosophical approach that might be useful called social constructivism in which value is placed on “shared human experience as the site of meaning making. There is no longer a belief in an outside authority who knows what is best for all teachers and students in all schools.

Rather, the socially constructed reality of the organization is the center of truth” (Snyder, Acker-Hocevar & Snyder, 2008, p. 112). So, in practical matters at the school I think we essentially need to find a middle ground that allows as much diversity as possible.

In the case of our school, the issue we need to settle is the definition of confidentiality and how far that extends. In Korea it is definitely not an issue of legality. If legality is not at stake, then it is a matter of the professional expectations placed by the Ministry of British Columbia as well as the alternating interpretations of these expectations as understood by the Koreans and Canadians who attempt to find and live by a common expectation. This is a matter of balancing each person’s inner world with the commonly held external world of our school.

The time for meeting Joon-Ho’s mother arrived. And, it didn’t take long to be clear that it was mostly me talking. I began by thanking Joon-Ho’s mother for communicating her concerns with us, and for trusting us with the care of her child. I also expressed the hope that she would spend no more sleepless nights as a result of this meeting and that she could go away knowing that her son was in a very positive environment. I reminded her that typically Canadian students are much happier than Korean ones citing the well known statistic that Korean students have among the highest rates of suicide in the world and one the lowest reported levels of happiness at school among 64 OECD nations surveyed (OECD, 2013).

I began by providing her with more background about BC schools before explaining our response to the concerns that she raised. I informed her that whereas many countries bemoan the multiculturalism, including Great Britain, Germany, Italians and Spanish who have declared multiculturalism to be a failure, we in Canada do not feel that way. In fact, next to our constitution the thing we are most proud of is being multicultural. I read somewhere that

immigrants are not expected so much to become Canadian as Canadians expect to be multicultural.

One of the things we have learned about the process of one culture encountering another is that there is something called culture shock. I went on to explain the symptoms of culture shock, the typical stages of it, and what one might do in order to overcome it. Joon-Ho's mother did not seem very enamoured with my description.

"This is not really the same thing," the mother replied. "We are not in Canada."

"When a child is on this campus, they are," I replied.

"But the students are Korean."

"Yes, but the staff, curriculum, pedagogy and management structures are all embedded with Canadian values. Normally if the child is older, the child may experience feelings of dislocation and strangeness that I have just described. But when the child is younger, they are usually more able to manage the differences in school climate. It is the parents who feel everything is strange. The point I wish to convey is that we have ways to respond to all the issues you have raised, and these ways of responding are consistent with the Canadian approach to learning. If it sounds odd or insufficient to you it is because we are operating out of a different frame than you may be expecting. We are not failing in our methods we are actually succeeding."

"So, how does our approach differ from what you might see in other places? If you will allow me" – I stood up and went to the white board where I had drawn a large stick man with a list of numbers descending from one to five down the side. Beside each number I put a line, representing some variable of behavior. I explained "Sometimes we measure children against what is expected from the behavior of an adult as the ideal model. We might identify these

behaviors as behavior one, two, three, four and five.” Then I pointed to the smaller stick man below. I had a similar list of one to five, but beside behavior four and five I placed a red X. “By this model, we would consider the child to be misbehaving or failing to behave properly as measured against an adult on points four and five. This is the *child as a small adult* model. However, according to the Canadian understanding, we look more at the age and stage of a child’s development and what can be expected as they learn what is socially appropriate behavior and generally do not consider behavior as measured against an ideal. We tend to look at behavior as measured against a norm, where no child is expected to fit the norm exactly. Canadians value diversity and even encourage it, because we do not see the norm as a standard, rather it is more like a meeting place upon which all students can relate socially. I illustrated this by drawing a horizontal black line on the board and then several other lines that waved above and below the norm to varying degrees. On a few lines I made larger peaks, especially one line. I pointed to the peak and said, if a child often challenges authority, for example, they are not so much doing something wrong as they are offending against the norm. This can have advantages and disadvantages. For the child, challenging authority can be a strength if that authority is oppressive and power hungry. We do not necessarily identify the behavior as wrong. We simply guide the child to consider what the consequences of such behavior would be and encourage the child to think about those consequences when they make behavioural choices.” I then passed the mother an article. “So, this brings us to the first and main issue, the swearing.”

The mother nodded.

“I drew this from one of many web sites that address the issue of children swearing” I began. “It speaks about what is age appropriate for children. The first thing we notice is that it is normal for children to experiment with swearing and that pretty much all children will do it

sometime. So, swearing would represent the black line, the line that represents what is normal for children. As far as we know, the child you have been speaking of has sworn twice this year.”

“But it was such a terrible word!”

“Yes, I understand and I do not know Korean so I cannot imagine how that word sounded. But I do wish to point out another aspect this page states about children swearing and that is that they often do not even know what they are saying.” I went on. “The article continues by suggesting what should be done. The first thing we are advised is not to overreact. If we react too much, we may in fact create the very problem we wish to avoid which is the child will see that using the word is a way to gain a reaction and that should the child desire a further reaction all they need to do is repeat the word. For this reason it is recommended that one of the first strategies is to ignore the behaviour. We did not ignore the behaviour, we spoke to the child and we phoned the parents to seek their assistance, but we did not treat it with any severity.”

“As to the pushing, the children play and push each other all the time. It is a kind of jostling, rather than pushing and they often lose footing when they play and it could easily be thought that they got pushed.”

“Oh, he was pushed” the parent said.

“Well, that is also possible. The problem is no one saw it, and the general tenor among the students is friendly so our assumption is that there is no issue to address. However, if your son is convinced he was pushed, or if he does not like pushing, we advise the following. It is derived from the University of Victoria (<http://www.witsprogram.ca/>). It is called WITS. (W) means walk away. If your son does not like pushing, he can just walk away. He doesn't need to run around with the other children when they are in their kind of bumping and jostling around. He can just find someone else to play with more quietly. Or, he can (I) ignore the behavior and

run around anyway, even if the occasional bumping annoys him. He can (T) talk it out and just explain to his friends that he doesn't like it when they bump him. Or, if he has tried these things and they do not work, he can also (S) seek help from his teacher or the playground supervisor. There are some expectations that correspond to these suggested strategies. One is, it is often quite difficult to do anything about any of these matters after the fact. Children have short attention spans and can quickly shift from one event to another in their lives. On issues such as this, if he reports an event at home and then mother calls the school, there is very little we can do at that point except watch about similar incidents in the future. We need to deal with the situation as it arises so that we can properly assess the situation and address it in a productive manner. This goes to the next point which is that we also teach our students assertiveness. They need to speak up for themselves. It is their responsibility to define for others what they are comfortable with or not. If our students speak up about their preferences, it will help resolve a lot of issues as they arise.”

“Yes, I also tell my son this. He needs to speak to the teacher. So, the main thing for me is that there should be some punishment for the swearing and for the pushing.”

From this comment, it became apparent that we were at an impasse. It seemed as if my entire presentation had been viewed as a rather lengthy preliminary to the more important matters: immediate results, measured in terms of severity of punishment. I reaffirmed for her that we won't be giving any punishments. This is not how we work, and we do so for very clear reasons, not because we are simply being absent minded or incompetent. We believe in the long run his son will be happier.

At that moment the school day ended and it was time to get Joon-Ho from his class. The meeting closed and it was clear at the end of the discussion, that Mother of Joon-Ho went away

unhappy and that is why JJ asked me to speak to everyone at Friday's staff meeting to watch very carefully about student behaviour next week.

We had a young girl interview for entrance that same week. Mi-Kyung seemed to perform fairly well in some respects but quite poorly in other respects. On some tests, for example, vocabulary, she knew almost every image and she was very quick about identifying it. On other tests such as paragraph writing, she said quite bluntly "I can't."

Mi-Kyung completed her assessments and I told her she could rejoin her parents. While she was in the side office with her parents, another office staff Aida popped in. She said to me in a conspiratorial whisper "Do you know who her father is?"

"No," I replied.

"He is a famous TV personality. Everyone in Korea knows him."

"Really?" I said. "I think Mi-Kyung might have a learning disability."

Aida's entire look and energy momentarily suspended. There was a sort of un-knowing pause.

"Let me start again," I said. "A TV star? Really! That is pretty incredible."

"Yes!" Aida said, noticeably returning to her flow. "Barb and I were quickly running around and picking up garbage."

"I noticed that. You put some framed pictures in the entrance."

"Yes, exactly!"

"So, you should take them on a school tour!"

"We already offered that, but they don't seem interested."

"I suppose they don't really want to stir up much attention."

“Probably.”

Aida heard something outside and went to investigate, meanwhile I carried on with other duties. Sometime later, I approached Barb, the one in charge of recruitment. She saw the results of the entrance tests on her desk and saw that I recommended the Mi-Kyung for enrolment. I had put a note below saying be sure to get any previous schooling records and all health related records. She asked me if I thought the Mi-Kyung could enrol and I said, I thought so. I told her about the odd extremes in her performance: being very good, even excellent at some matters and completely incapable in other matters. I said this might not be so unusual for a second grade applicant, but that there was something odd about it. I suspected that there was a learning disability here.

“Really?” she replied.

“Well, think about it. It makes sense. Her parents are media celebrities right? So, for them money is not an issue. That means that they could take their daughter to any kind of school. But they don’t, they come to our little school. Why? There must be a reason for it.”

“Hmmm, you think so?”

“Well, I could be wrong, but it makes sense to me.”

The following day, Barb approached me and said that I was right about my suspicion. Both she and Aida did some research and found a television interview online in which the parents complained about their daughter’s previous school. It seemed the daughter had some behavior, and did not get along too well with her classmates or teacher. In addition, JJ the owner learned from a friend who knew the actor’s family that this couple was known to be a bit crazy. This worried JJ but he had already offered a place in the school.

We looked at each other a bit, then I laughed. I said, “Isn’t it interesting, after we remove Celina, that we get another special needs girl, but this one is high profile! If we mess up with her, the smear on our reputation will be grave. Surely the family will get on another television show and let the world know what kind of school we are. JJ has to accept her specialness now, and if we don’t accommodate her needs then the school will lose. So, our hand is forced. We are becoming a school that accepts other than normal students.”

Barb looked uncertain how to reply, not apparently enjoying matters as much as I was. She relayed that JJ asked me to share with the staff to observe very carefully the behavior of this new child as well as Joon-Ho.

In the staff meeting that night, I told the teachers that it appears our school is really growing. In the last eight weeks we had more than 1 entrance per week. At this rate we will have a higher population in the school than when they were hired and that means we will have recovered our losses from the struggles our school experienced over the ownership issue. This Monday we will have two new students.”

“Three!” Brant said.

“Three?” I repeated.

“We just got an email. Another one will be starting on Monday making three.”

“Wow! Amazing. They just keep coming!”

“However, we have a special case in one student” I told them. I related the entire story starting with the fact that we have celebrity in the school now and how this can be a real benefit as our video program is beginning to gain a life of its own. I then went on to state the details about the girls’ possible learning disability and the parents being known as crazies. I reminded them to watch carefully, and this included Joon-Ho as well.

There was a kind of mixed response, both agitation and nervousness as well as excitement about the possibilities. I said “What we need to do is be very watchful. I don’t mean that we are looking for trouble, but merely looking for details. What often gets us into trouble is not what actually happens, but what is said to happen. We need to keep rumours down and focus on the facts. I am not suggesting that we be Gestapo who stare down their prisoners. Not at all. And when I was a student I hated teachers who directed such stares at me. We need to watch gently, from afar so that we have the available facts if we need them. It is a balance.”

I continued, “The thing is, we are always going to attract folks like this. It is in the nature of our situation here in Korea. Korea has normal schools in which everyone needs to conform to the strict protocols of competition, and then there are the schools for disabled students. The schools for the disabled are quite extreme and parents with children who do not fit the highly competitive model have no place to go until they find us. We are a workable alternative. Because this is so, we need to get good at what we do. We are not going to make any kind of name by simply being normal. We need to face challenges of our circumstances. When we face them and overcome them, then we will have something to claim. This will establish us as unique and valuable. And, we can do it! Why not? Let us not be afraid, but let us get into it.”

I typically start my day with some readings which help me orient. Before I walked out the door this morning, I read O’Reilly. “It turns out, everything at Plum Village is understood to be practice: cutting carrots, carrying wood, riding in the bus” (O’Reilly, 2000, p. 129). It is an injunction to be present and alert to the world; an attempt to be open to reality with the whole self and avoid getting stuck. Reality in this sense is seen as both very harsh, demanding and at the same time beautiful and serene.

It did not take long into the morning before these meditations had a chance to engage. I was in the middle of a conversation with Aida, when I noticed her looking over my shoulder to the office door as a frowning mother of Joon-Ho and her angry looking husband stepped in. Aida and Barb's countenance changed as they quickly guided the two parents into our conference room. I retreated to my office and stood there facing the open door. Aida passed back and forth across the entrance to my office as she grabbed a writing pad on her way back to the meeting room. I whispered "Let me know if I can do anything." She nodded briefly and disappeared.

This often happens when there is a tense issue. Angry parents come in, but they cannot easily speak English, if at all, and when they are upset the language issue only intensifies. It is almost useless for me to be in the conversation. So, Barb sat with the parent and Aida came and went. Her next retreat from the shouting in the next room was to go back to her desk and get on the phone. I followed her around to her desk. "You are calling JJ?" I asked. She nodded, looking oddly like a painted Madonna - mouth open slightly as she looked upwards into a corner of the ceiling, phone on her ear. She glanced at me and said "They want to sue."

"What! Sue about what?"

"The injury."

"Injury?"

"From Monday, the incident with Tan Jeon."

"I don't remember any injury."

"They took a photo."

"What? I don't even know what they are talking about."

"They are really upset."

Aida didn't have to tell me. The father was still shouting at Barb.

“He is saying what kind of school is this? No answer.” Aida, hung up the phone and went back toward the room.

“Can I do anything” I asked still in a whisper. There wasn’t much to do. As soon as Aida disappeared I went to the teachers involved. I was glad we asked the teachers to be watchful on Friday because sure enough, one of the teachers observed the incident that the parents were now complaining about. Joon-Ho, was playing tag with the other elementary students. He stood on the step at the front of the school and Tan Jeon touched him fairly lightly. Joon-Ho fell from the step and immediately claimed that Tan Jeon pushed him. Tan Jeon apologized but Joon-Ho still complained to the teacher that Tan Jeon had hit him. Mr. Haru, who is very attentive and reliable observed the entire incident from a position directly in front of the two boys and from very little distance away. The teacher told Joon-Ho that Tan Jeon never hit him, he tagged him, it was not very hard and he even apologized.

The teacher, Mr. Haru, went to the homeroom teacher and reported the incident. The homeroom teacher Mr. Bergin then spoke with the boy and asked the boy if he was hurt at all. The boy said yes, so Mr. Bergin asked the boy to show him the place he got hurt. The boy showed his shin to Mr. Bergin who observed that there was an area of skin, approximately 4 cm, that looked irritated with a bit of redness. The skin had not broken or scratched at all. Mr. Bergin asked Joon-Ho why he didn’t go to the office with this and Joon-Ho said it did not hurt that much.

I went back to the office with this story in hand and saw Aida on the phone. I mouthed “JJ?” and she nodded. Barb was also at her desk and on the phone. I whispered to Aida that I checked out the story and said “There is nothing to blame here. We are completely clean and did

our leg work on a non-incident. There are no grounds and I beg those parents to sue us. It will be a complete waste of their money.”

“It’s not that,” Aida replied. “They are suing about our fee structure. We are a Hogwon and are not allowed to charge for enrolment fees.”

Of course they are doing that, I thought. They have nothing else to stand on.

“The mother also mentioned what you said about culture shock. She cannot accept it.”

“And for that reason, this family needs to go,” I retorted. “They do not accept that we do things differently here.”

“She is also saying that we aren’t talking to her the same way either. She thinks our attitude has become cold.”

“And, again, this is why this family needs to go. In fact, they have never understood or trusted us and now they are taking the word of an eight year old against the words of multiple professionals.”

“Exactly” Aida replied. “And they have been here how long? Three weeks? They just don’t get it.”

“And they do not want to get it. So, they need to go.”

Aida hung up the phone after speaking with JJ and said that we will refund all the money.

“Good” I said. Then returned to my office.

Not long after the parents left, I came out of the office and saw both Aida and Barb. They looked shell shocked. I said, why not come to my office? They followed me and I shut the door. “You need to realize this whole incident has nothing to do with you” I said to them. “You can’t let this bother you. I don’t mean anything against the humanity of these parents but for you this experience is like walking in the forest and suddenly coming upon a rabid dog. It is shocking,

and frightening. Even if we put the dog out of its misery, you are still left with the image of its raging. It is an encounter with the wild side of nature, but it is not to be feared. You just need to carry on. The plus side is, we had parents enrol in our school, who frankly detested what we stood for. Instead of this situation dragging out over perhaps months and infecting many other families with negativity, we ended it in a matter of a few weeks. In my view this is success. We will not appeal to everyone.”

There were chuckles, and relief. For me however, a feeling of exhilaration! I have begun to think that perhaps I have proven my call. We are growing rapidly while establishing a clear sense of ourselves as a school. If we look at the last six weeks we have averaged one entrance per week, and this week we have 4 entrance exams and one person who will be bringing more than one parent interested in enrolling their children in first grade. If I recalculate each week I would guess that our *rate* of enrolment is increasing. If rate of increase keeps going we are going to be very full, very soon.

Yesterday we had a staff meeting and I asked teachers to share moments that were beautiful to them in the past week. As I looked around the room my eyes settled on Markus who was sitting at his desk at the back of the room. He broke into a smirk. Markus is a tall young man. Even when he sits in a small student chair, he towers above the second and third graders standing beside him. He is the first person of whom I wrote in his annual evaluation “I trust him.” I am not sure why this is, perhaps his Catholic background. Perhaps because of the content of our discussions. Whenever we talk about students, their parents, or situations that arise, he seems prepared to be a strong and careful advocate of his students.

“Markus?” I asked him, in order to provoke the commentary.

He looked downward and appeared to blush, apparently shy to speak of about the event. “Yeah, I already told Kelly about this earlier today. You want me to tell about that?”

Why are people so hesitant to speak their minds I wondered? Why do they need my say so, in order to speak up? “Yeah” I said, looking around at the others. “So, as you know Tan Jeon has been receiving plenty of unmerited disfavour from a number of parents. He has been taken and privately lectured by two adults who are not teachers. One of those adults even threatened to kill him, yet we have found no fault in his behaviour. And, his parents are getting annoyed with the unwelcome attention as well. This week, we even had a set of parents threatening to sue the school over an issue involving Tan Jeon for something that we are convinced is completely innocent. Fortunately, as you recall from last Friday, JJ asked me to share with you that we may have some crazy parents and we need to watch the students very carefully. Both Kasey and Markus did so, and for this reason we had all the detail we needed to refute every charge this parent laid on us. They came into the school with photos, shouting and telling us how terrible we were and the father even phoned the police. Anyway, this morning Markus ran upstairs to share a much more heart warming story with me and I thought you would like to hear it.”

“Actually, I had some photocopying to do and just shared it with you.”

“Oh, sure” I responded. Of course he did not run up solely to share this story. “But you were smiling quite a bit as you told it.”

“Yeah” he said, and as if giving up an arm wrestle shyly rolling his head to the side. “So, as Kelly said, Tan Jeon has been getting a fair amount of negative attention and we also have a new student Mi-Kyung. She just started on Tuesday and she also came to us with a reputation of possibly being a problem child – we mentioned her at last Friday’s staff meeting also. The very first day that Mi-Kyung was here she seemed to hit it off with Tan Jeon. It was really nice seeing

someone who appreciates him. Then with the problems we were having with the parents going to the police on Wednesday and threatening to contact Tan Jeon's parents, we thought maybe this is why both Tan Jeon and his sister were away on Thursday. It turns out Tan Jeon and his sister were away to the dentist and they were back today. This morning when Mi-Kyung saw Tan Jeon, she said "Oh, I missed you Tan Jeon!" and gave him a big hug.

"Ha ha, I can already tell Tan Jeon is going to be a lady's man" Kirsten blurted out.

"I was thinking the same thing" I said, redirecting the conversation. "Anyone else have any stories of beauty to tell?"

"Yeah, I have one" Kirsten said. "As some of you may know, I am taking over the library. There is a lot of work that needs to be done that is going to take time to organize and a lot of physical moving around as well. So, I was there in the library, taking things off the shelves and there were piles everywhere and then some students, the grade nines came in and started helping. Then the grade tens showed up and the grade sixes. A number of them knew how to tune violins so they took the violins off the top shelf and started tuning them. There were a lot of students and a lot of moving around. I had a few weeks of work ahead of me and it all got accomplished in, like half an hour and I just felt so grateful."

"Really! The students just jumped in and helped like that. Wow! Nice." Aurore piped in.

"Great!" I interjected. "Anyone else?"

"I wanted to share that Seongsu has made a lot of progress recently," Faye spoke up. "I have been very worried about him and as many of you know. I've called his parents, given Seongsu extra after-school attention and have had a number of conversations with him and he suddenly seems to be producing results. I am really impressed with him and a lot more hopeful that he is going to succeed this year."

“Thanks Faye, that’s great to hear. I also wanted to share something I saw at the student led conferences. I was watching Jimmy doing his presentation for his mother. While watching him, I turned to Aurore and said – he’s talking! He is explaining his work! Fluently, in English! To his mother! I didn’t know he had it in him. So the next time I saw him I mentioned to Jimmy how impressed I was and he seems to have been walking on air for the last few days.”

“So, what is it about all these things that make them beautiful?” I continued to prod. There was silence in the room. “Don’t you think each of these things is about breakthroughs? It is as if each of these episodes is a mark of passing a barrier of some kind. Seongsu, getting out of his apathy; the students in the library breaking into a spontaneous act of care; Tan Jeon, getting the concrete recognition from a peer that is perhaps long overdue; and, Jimmy transiting from an all Korean language world to an all English language world, however imperfectly.”

“So, did someone really call the police?” Aurore asked.

“Yes, OK let me tell you the entire episode from start to finish so that you will understand.”

I then relayed the stories of the parent orientation meeting, the follow up meeting regarding culture shock and then the episode in the office and the parent calling the police and the subsequent withdrawal of the child from our school and tuition refund.

“That’s amazing!” Aurore blurted out.

“But this is about gaining our voice as a school” I replied. “I don’t feel it is such a bad thing. We are defining ourselves in the face of opposition and in some ways it is this opposition that makes our voice clear and distinct. And, I might add, I felt invigorated by it all. I told my wife the other day that I felt I had just gotten off of a wild motor cycle ride.”

Lawrence appeared at the door of my office today. I had earlier received an email from him that offered a detailed explanation of how much he was still suffering. In this convoluted and heavily worded email he recounted the difficulties of continuing in Ms. O's classes. He no doubt needed to discuss this matter in person. I invited him to meet with me, and soon he was sitting in my office where he began his explanation.

"I wanted to see you to explain to you that even though I appear to be doing well, I am not actually doing very well still. Since January I have been trying to build a relationship with Ms. O but it has not been working. I feel I cannot put on the smiley face any more. I feel it is somehow hypocritical." Lawrence had his arms folded in front of himself with his wrists below his waist. He looked somewhat twisted as his head shifted from side to side. Occasionally he would look up at me and sit up straight, but soon enough he would again be in a slouched and twisted posture like a cinnamon twist.

"Ok," I replied. "Do you feel you are supposed to build a relationship with Ms. O?"

"Yes! Don't you think it is right? But I still suffer so much. She always isolates me. Sometimes she doesn't answer my questions and even though I can't prove it with evidence she says bad things about me to other students. I am afraid of her. I don't want to go into her classes. The problem is, I know now that I cannot respect her. I mean, I know that if we started differently it might not be this way but we already had our experience and I feel I cannot go back. I cannot have confidence in her as a teacher. Do you think that is OK? I know I am wrong, I don't mean that I did the right thing, and Ms. O did the wrong thing, I just mean I cannot accept her now. I think I can continue in her class and I can finish the year, but inside myself I cannot look up to her, like I looked up to you or Mr. Steiner. Do you think I am crazy? Don't you think I should feel shame?"

“Feel shame?”

“Yeah. Don’t you think I should feel shame?”

“For what?”

“Because I tried. You know. I hoped we could build a better and better relationship because BC schools are about relationships and that we treat each other like humans, not like the Korean schools or American schools which just keep a professional and cold distance.”

“But why do you think you need to like Ms. O?” I asked. “You might not ever like her. There is no shame in that.”

“Really?”

“Really. What you need to do now, is not build a relationship with your teacher, you simply need to recognize that you and she do not really hit it off and you need to endure. This sort of thing happens every year. I have seen it again and again. In the school I was at in Kuwait we had 2000 students. That means we had six classes at every grade level and at the start of each year there were always one or two, maybe three students who simply could not settle with the teacher they were assigned to. So, it was easy, we just switched the students to another class. Finished. There is nothing wrong with this and there is no need for shame. It is just a mismatch. The problem in our small school is that there is no place to switch you. We don’t have that option. So, the only alternative is to endure. And it is both of you who have to endure by the way. It is not easy for Ms. O also. You just make the best of a difficult situation.”

“But how can I continue to do this? I just cannot go into her class even though I know it is my fault. I accept it but I just can’t do it.”

“But you have to. You cannot escape it. What I mean is life will often put us in these kind of situations and this is precisely what you need to learn to face now. I am sure I can think of

twenty examples but let me give you just two. My wife got her doctorate in physiology. In the pursuit of this degree she had to work with one professor. This one professor had the power to give or not give this degree to my wife. Yet, over time my wife came to discover or believe that the professor hated her actually. She did not approve of my wife's fun approach to life, did not approve of my wife's pleasure in dressing in attractive clothing, my wife's happy and non-serious approach to her work. There were many matters of personality conflict between the two of them and my wife always felt the threat that she might be wasting her life and her time. This took place over three years of full time study with this one person who seemed to hate her. You can believe this was a great pressure! My wife wondered if this professor would destroy her in the end. Yet, my wife endured and she got her degree. It was not easy. It was even torture and my wife certainly thought many dark thoughts about her professor.

In my own case, about a week after arriving at my job in Kuwait, I observed the vice principal shouting at a teacher. I was stunned. I thought - who the hell do you think you are? You (the vice-principal) are just another human. You sit on the toilet just as anyone does yet you have the nerve to speak to another teacher in this way. I was further stunned a few weeks later when I realized that the principal at this school supported the vice principal's behavior. I wondered to myself what sort of school I had travelled so far and sold all my worldly possessions to come to. But, I wound up working there for nine years! I endured. And, while I am not saying you need to do this, I am saying that I was able eventually to get along with this principal. In fact, I got promoted and I learned to see her in a different light and I was able to help bring about changes in the school so that there was a different tone."

"Yeah, OK" said Lawrence. "But I feel so much shame." Lawrence was twisting around, almost curling in his chair in front of me. "I feel embarrassed to admit my feeling inside."

“Lawrence, I don’t understand your feeling of shame.”

“But don’t you think I am abnormal? Don’t you think my long email to Ms. O was not normal?”

“The long email was not helpful and it was a sign of your distress. I do not think it was the best thing to do but I also do not say you are abnormal. I would say you are human. And what you did was not wrong, I would say it was not the best thing to do. There were probably better choices that could have been made. But there were probably worse choices also.”

“But what can I do inside. I mean even if I go to her class, even if I finish the year with her I can’t feel that respect inside.”

“But why do you need to feel that? You just have to get along. When I was working in Kuwait there were times when I simply had to have a thick skin. I just developed a little saying to myself. If the principal or vice principal came and bothered me about something I just said to myself “I need to throw meat to the dogs to keep them from barking.” It made me feel better to use that phrase, but it also allowed me to think practically and do what I needed to do in order to stop the noise that I felt coming from them. They were my superiors, but for me they were barking dogs. I had no inner feeling of respect in those situations, merely a feeling of solving a problem. Yet, interestingly, this very determination of mine is what led to my ability to work productively and in the end establish a tone of respect and humanity between myself and the principal.”

At that moment, Lawrence’s English teacher showed up at my office door. Lawrence was missing something important and needed to return to class. Lawrence thanked me, and off he went.

A few hours later Lawrence's father appeared for a meeting he had scheduled with me. I welcomed him and we both stepped into the conference room beside my office. Lawrence's father spoke in broken and halting English. His voice, like his son's was soft and he had compassionate eyes. After shaking hands with him, I came around and sat across from him in the small room. There was a dish of chocolate covered wafers on my left and the sliding doors overlooking the playground outside. Lawrence's father began. "Lawrence cannot continue..." he paused searching for words. "He tried...". Again a pause. Clearly English speaking was not easy for him.

"Would you like a translator?" I gestured to the door. "We could get one of the office staff to help."

"Ah... no" he replied. "I want to be secret."

"OK, I understand."

"Ms. O makes his friends against him" he continued.

"That's his view" I interjected.

Mr. Han replied, "Yes, his view. He is not treated fair." It was difficult with the language barrier to be clear whether Mr. Han understood that this was a matter of perspective more than a matter of fact. I realized that we were again going over territory that I had heard several times and after several investigations we came to the determination that Ms. O was not doing anything wrong with Lawrence, nor was Lawrence really doing anything wrong with Ms. O but that the two of them simply produced reactions in each other.

I interrupted the flow of the conversation. Mr. Han was struggling too much to say his feeling and I felt it was already old news anyway. I asked Mr. Han, "Would you like to know my opinion on the matter?" He smiled, and nodded. "Yes," he replied.

I proceeded to tell Mr. Han what I had shared with Lawrence a few hours earlier. I got out my pad of paper and drew a stick man. I told him that we tend to think of humans according to various standards.

“Yes, yes...” his father said listening with care.

I drew some bullet points in a list down the side of the stick man. “And, an adult will achieve a certain number of these qualities.” I began to make checkmarks beside the bullet points. “Where that person fails to achieve the desired qualities, we can say it is a failure.” I marked X’s beside the bullets. “This is how I believe Lawrence views himself as well as his teacher. There are elements of failure and negative judgement.”

“I agree with you,” Mr. Han smiled, again speaking softly as he leaned forward toward me.

Then, I drew a horizontal line across the page. “In Canada” I began, “we do not really think in the way of pre-set standards. We tend to think more along a normative line.” I started drawing other lines waving above and below the normal (center) line.

“Yes, yes” Mr. Han spoke.

“No one is really normal as such. We all wave around normalcy which is merely a statistical average of all represented behaviours. Some are above and some are below, and above does not mean better and below does not mean worse, it merely represents various polarities.”

“Correct” Mr. Han continued. He himself was a teacher and displayed a kind of pedagogical manner.

“And sometimes we are very much different from normal in some aspect” I said as I drew a curve with a very high trough. At the same time I drew another trough downward directly below the high trough. There were thus two humps, one above the line and one below the line.

“This is Lawrence and Ms. O,” I explained. They are not doing anything wrong, but the point at which Lawrence may be a bit unusual, is the same point at which Ms. O is the opposite. Both of them might be a bit out of normal on this point.”

“I agree” Lawrence’s dad continued to look to me smiling and urged me to go on in my explanation.

“So this is not a situation of anything being done wrong by either party. It is a matter of difficult fit. When they cross each other on this issue ...”, I started making sparking noises with my mouth. Mr. Han chuckled.

“Yes, yes” he said smiling.

I told Mr. Han that what I explained to Lawrence is that he needs to endure. Lawrence needs to rise up and see this through to the end and when he does he will feel strength flood in as he recovers his feeling of normalcy and he will gain in confidence and realize he is capable of facing other challenges in the future. “In the end, I don’t think it is such a bad thing” I explained. “Really! And I speak as one who cares for Lawrence. I have a son of my own. I would definitely give the same advice to my son.”

“He is not mature enough” Mr. Han said, nodding his head.

“Yes, and no one wants to see their child suffer. Actually I am very gentle with my son. Sometimes I think my wife is too rough. But I say nothing because I think children need both. If they have too soft, it is not good and if they have too hard it is not good. A bit of both is better and Lawrence is definitely getting a bit of both.”

There was a pause. Lawrence’s father seemed satisfied and he continued to look at me with satisfaction in his eyes.

“I want to know about next year. What classes will Ms. O teach?” he asked. “Lawrence wants to stay at WCA, but ...”

“Oh!” I said. “You think we will schedule Lawrence in a class with Ms. O? We will not do that. You don’t want that. Lawrence doesn’t want it. I don’t want it. Mr. J.J. the owner doesn’t want it and Ms. O doesn’t want it. I think we are all agreed. And, I believe the students are submitting their course choices today so, once we know what Lawrence is choosing we can go ahead and plan the courses.”

“Are you sure?” Mr. Han asked.

“Of course. There are benefits to the present struggle but we do not wish to extend it artificially.” I wondered, in the end if this was perhaps the main point of this conversation after all. As the conversation came to a close, I asked Mr. Han if I could tell him what I noticed about Lawrence just the other day.

“Interestingly, Lawrence and I had a very good conversation just yesterday. It seemed to me on that day that Lawrence really had made significant progress. He came to me with the purpose of doing a video documentary but our conversation moved into matters of education. We spoke about how education in Canada differed from education around the world. I said that the significant difference between BC Education and the American models I have been a part of is that students are treated more as humans. We educate students (holistically including social, emotional, aesthetic, intellectual and physical). The child, is in a sense, the subject of study. The American systems I have been in tend to teach curriculum where the subject of study is more oriented to traditional lines of Math, Science, English etc... I think this is true if you compare BC with Korean systems as well. Lawrence quite agreed with me as soon as I mentioned this point. He told me that as part of his required work segment of the Graduation Transitions

program he has been working as a teacher's aide for Ms. Howard. He learned how much work it is to be a teacher and appreciated how much time Ms. Howard put in for the benefit of students. However, more than that, during the holiday he said he volunteered to work with a Korean school and found how different the attitude is. He told me about the fact that the principal has a driver bring him to school. The principal is like a king. And, Lawrence asked if he could speak to the principal several times but was never allowed. The principal was too high. But here in my office we were having a friendly chat. As we spoke about these issues, I sat looking at Lawrence and I had a moment of synchronicity in which I viewed him and saw him as a man, a teacher. I said to him, "You know, you would be a great teacher. You may not choose to go this way. I am sure you could do many things well, but I just now saw you as an adult and to my mind you have the qualities of a great teacher. You are going to do fine Lawrence. You just have to accept and overcome your challenges."

As I reflected on the checklist view of the complete adult or student compared to the way of normative reference, I realized that actually I do not even compare myself to a normal line. I merely compare myself to myself. I have no interest in checklists or even comparison to the norm. I just see no need for it. Checklists are arbitrary, and as to norms, these are merely statistical models derived from possible representations of various social performances. Why should the average position be the desirable one? Don't norms change? Who changes them? Does anyone lead by being normal? Why not be an outlier?

Chapter 9 – Choosing our trance

This morning Phunee, watching our son, complained out loud about how life for a child seems only about having fun. I replied, “If life is not fun, then why live?”

Phunee said, “The only happiness is to get out of Karma.”

I said, “Yes it is a kind of death. But I have already died. It is no longer I that live, but the fun that lives within me.”

This effectively ended conversation. But, joking as we both were, we were at the same time speaking out of our own trances. For my part, I have not been bored for more years than I can tell now. Which means, perhaps, that I have not suffered any spiritual depression, but rather have been in a kind of bliss. I never take this bliss for granted and know that there are always threats to this state of awareness, but I also believe it is possible for anyone to achieve if they want it. It is a value that needs to be fed again and again.

Last night Phunee also brought up a similar matter for discussion. She said Thai’s believe the main purpose of education is to get a job and then that job allows you to have certain outcomes in life. More than that the aim is to get the best education at the best university in subjects you may not even like so you can get the best job, even if your heart and natural talent do not reside in that sector. This is the reason, she explained, why skills of some employees might be poor, and why there is little artistic or musical development in Thailand because following your interest is not encouraged. I said to her that the pursuit of practical ends in life, rather than ends of value makes a life of servitude far more probable than a life of liberty. It means being a slave to something you do not enjoy. She agreed and said that her parents are quite proud that they own so much land. But she often wonders what is the land for? It doesn’t seem to have any purpose to her parents except that they are proud to have accumulated it. They

just give it away after they die and in the mean time they don't move to the city, they just stay in their village house. This is very Asian style she says.

I am fascinated with the story of Trump. Trump is the epitome of a similar way of thinking. People consider him to be a shining example of success but when I think of him, I fail to see what makes him considered successful. He seems weak in so many ways. He seems to need praise and adulation. It seems necessary to his self worth to denigrate and tear down the self worth of others. He seems to need his own toxic reality more than the truth. But, the adulation of the crowd shows that this weakness dwells in many people, so many that he represents a kind of common sense. In my view, what has produced this kind of person is the near total national commitment to an educational system in which the dominant value appears to be survival of the fittest with its relentless pursuit of attainment. Donald Trump might be a kind of genius with money, and even that is debatable, but I think he knows little or nothing about human value. If he wins the election, then this is merely proof that his views are common, and that is scarier than the existence of an individual person called Trump.

One of the things I have been wondering lately is if I should return to Canada in the near future. One of the arguments in favour of trying to get a job in Canada is that there is a better social support system for my son including education. But I am having second thoughts. One of the contrasts I make between Canada and the United States is that the moral fiber of Canada is not found in attainment as it is in the US, but in government regulation and compliance. Where we might say the American context neutralizes moral choice and puts attainment in its place, the Canadian context neutralizes moral choice and in its place substitutes conformity to law or social norms. And, the law gets increasingly intrusive especially in child rearing matters: car seat laws,

regulation against leaving children alone at home, rules against spanking etc. to the extent that children could be taken away if the state deemed you to be an unworthy parent. While I am not trying to make the case that parents should be incompetent I do believe that parents need to make judicial decisions that might not be well understood by a dispassionate public eye. There is a feeling among Canadians that the solution to all challenges in life is just follow the rules or directions. This *Lego Movie* (Lin, Lee, Lord, & Miller, 2014) attitude is pervasive to the extent that if you question the rules it is as if you are questioning morality itself. The same kind of situation exists in the education system also.

Outsiders identify this conformity to regulation as a kind of naïve smugness – I have heard so from people who are not Canadian and keep me in their confidence. There is a sense one acquires from speaking with Canadians that everything has all been figured out and resolved in its basics. Now it is just a matter of bringing everyone to conformity with the model through the provision of polite information, follow-up and continued refinement. But it hasn't been all figured out, and I noticed how numerous Canadians were incapable of adjusting to the reality of their jobs in Kuwait where I worked. I saw many of them leave before the end of their contract sometimes huffing in very loud indignation at matters that other people could not comprehend.

I think of Strati's (1999) distinction between value rationality and ends rationality and his claim that from the point of view of ends rationality value rationality is irrational. Value rationality includes things like love, nobility, character, justice, all that kind of stuff. What I have such issue with over the years is how ends rationality has been creeping into Canadian education since early in my career and then when I went to the US and an American system in Kuwait, I found it to be even worse. Ends rationality was impinging on my values. It made me angry when I had to conform to principles that were, in my view, unloving. I began to notice it first when I

saw the emphasis on following the dictates of curriculum rather than the unique interests of the children, or the strong pressure to avoid anything that appears to be inappropriate contact or even revealing too much about your personal life. While the American system seemed to replace care and warmth with accountability and pep rallies, the Canadian system replaced it with a sort of clinical attitude. And my feelings about all this would get mixed up with my attitude to my mother who it seemed to me was likewise more interested in externals than internals. Why do we put insecticide on the lawns just to make the grass look like a carpet? Why do we have a room in the house that no one can sit in unless they have showered and are wearing clean clothes? There is a kind of antiseptic attitude in Canadian culture that aims to clean the life out of things and replace it with good sterile procedures.

Annie Dillard (1990) says the creek that she spent a year observing, despite its incredible beauty, is an inhuman and inhospitable place. It doesn't give a whit about human life. So impressed was she by the brutality of nature that she wondered if we were sired by a beast. But she says we do not have to conform to the inhospitable reality of nature. Rather, we bring our human values to the creek. So that is the challenge. For me, as the principal, the school as a competitive environment is the creek. In contrast to the adopting an American survival of the fittest approach, the creek is the wild place I go to be a spiritual person and humanize the institution with value. In contrast with the Canadian antiseptic view of education, it is the place I go to bring back some of the loamy earth.

There is a chapter in Mary Rose O'Reilley's (2000) book *The barn at the end of the world* entitled "Trancing a Rabbit." In this chapter O'Reilley refers to a technique that is useful for calming undomesticated rabbits if they happen to feel threatened by something, perhaps a

vacuum cleaner. It is a kind of relaxing deep hypnosis brought on by laying the rabbit close and gently stroking its entire body into relaxation. The image serves as a metaphor for all of us as we face the challenges of the world. The chapter poses the question of how much reality we are able to face. How capable are we with staring deep into the abyss? Most of us are able to avoid considering the fearful and precarious nature of existence as a result of our socialization (domestication). There is a trance that takes place in our lives that differs according to culture.

This trancing metaphor has become important for me recently. I have applied for work as a professor of education in my British Columbia home town, the one I left over 14 years ago. It seems a lifetime ago that I drove by the cemetery and promised myself I would be buried there, overlooking the ocean from its hillside perch. I never intended my adventure in international education and only did so for reasons of a downturned local economy. Yet, here I am. But as exciting as it is for me to entertain the prospect of returning home, I have misgivings and thoughts of reverse culture shock. I am certain I will feel boredom and sadness upon my return.

I have discussed this with a long time Chinese friend of mine whom I knew before we both left Canada. She left for her home in Shanghai and I departed for my job in the United States. Recently she moved back to Canada to live permanently. She agrees with me, that Canadians in this part of the world live in a kind of fantasy. (Don't we all?) I recall that Pierre Burton once said life in British Columbia, at least along the coast, is a bit like living in a postcard. There is a happiness and light mentality that does not resonate much with the rest of the world. And, why not? In comparison with the "stick Indians" of the prairie (a term shared with me by a first nations friend) the first nations along the coast of British Columbia had it relatively easy in early pre-Canadian history. They had plenty of food from the ocean which they did not

have to leave their settlements to gather, and they had long seasons of artistic productivity. This trance of relative ease tends to continue within the province's various institutions.

As appealing as this sounds, there is something about me that does not get overly excited about returning. Along with this sense of easy living is a further orientation that tends not to acknowledge the hardships that life can impose, or over exaggerate the minor irritations of living as if they should count as significant. My Chinese friend shared with me the shock she and her daughter felt when one of the students at her daughter's school refused to sit next to another student on a bus and broke into tears because she could not sit with her friend. The father in this case was so tender and soft with the tearful daughter. My friend reports that she and her own daughter just stood in stunned silence. They could not imagine someone so weakened as to be brought to tears over a place on a bus. What was worse in their minds, was that this girl gained the sympathy of other parents standing nearby with their own children preparing to head to school.

Canada can sometimes be thought of as an island of calm in a generally more disordered and disturbed world of international strife. Many people come to Canada bringing their wealth with them and live there as a bedroom community of the world while the harsher realities remain beyond the border. Those who come to Canada, understand the contrasts between living in Canada and the rest of the world, but those who have always lived in Canada can tend to be a little bit like Alice, prior to falling through the looking glass. Us Canadian folk have often not awoken to the shocking elements of reality.

Here in Korea, we had a discussion in our staff meeting recently about care. Care is the number one professional standard for BC educators. It comes about three standards ahead of actual instruction. This standard has several descriptive layers attached to it which over recent

weeks we have spent some time uncovering. As a final wrap up to this professional standard we viewed a video presentation about the real core curriculum (care). Several points were raised, including the fact that care is an art and involves decisions about how to individualize the sort of attention we provide students. And, we spoke about how any student faced with a teacher who put on the false front of care was easily identifiable. But this led to an alternative situation in which rather than presenting a falsely pleasing aspect to the student we present anger.

I shared with the teachers that I have expressed anger with students on three occasions during my nine years of work in Kuwait. The students in each case were completely unmanageable and this was one of the reasons why two of these cases were assigned to my class. Each of these Grade 7 children had drivers and maids at their beck and call and could not distinguish behavior appropriate to adults and behaviour that might be displayed to a young sibling. Each of these children had long established patterns of using childish rages or complete disregard as a means of getting what they wanted. The administration at our school was confident that I was both caring and firm and they entrusted me with these children.

I have always been told as a teacher “never get in a power struggle with students.” I have taken this advice to heart and have consistently avoided such encounters, but in some cases I felt a compulsion, fueled by care, to address students in a very confrontational manner. In one case the student wanted to tell the school bus driver where to drive him. The school bus driver, who accustomed to taking orders from Kuwaiti citizens (of all ages) looked between me, the English speaking teacher and the Kuwaiti child, appearing to face an ethical dilemma about who to obey. Worse than that the driver did not understand English, but he perfectly well understood the Kuwaiti language of the child, member of the ruling culture of the land, who thus held the advantage. I was responsible for the children on the sidewalk who had just disembarked, as well

as the child on the bus. I had already directed the child off the bus several times. Once again I directed him off the bus, this time with more firmness in my voice. The child simply stared at me with an attitude of defiant and impish delight. He replied, “No” and then directed the driver to proceed with a “Yallah,” the Arab word for “get going.” The bus driver immediately put the bus in gear to drive the Kuwaiti child away. Something flipped in me and I enacted rage. I directed it with intensity through my eyes and my tongue gathered fire. I began to shout in loud and demanding tones that this child get off the bus NOW! I put my face right in front of his and his complacent self satisfied look took on a sudden urgency as he gathered his bags, dropping some items. I proceeded further with a few lines I save for such occasions. “Who do you think you are? You think you can speak to adults in this manner? You are a child, and you need to wake up! This is a real world and you have to get along in it. What do you, a child, know about life? You have hardly been here long enough to know your own name and you think you are going to tell adults what to do and where to go? You are in a skating club and yet what did you do the whole time? You sat in McDonalds and kept eating for the entire hour. Here you are with Mac sauce on your face, ketchup and Pepsi on your shirt and you are going to stand here and tell the bus driver to drive you somewhere while your teacher is telling you to get off the bus?” I continued to challenge him, my voice raising a slight tone higher. The student, now positioned on the sidewalk backed away from me wide eyed and silent as I continued my rant. He hid behind a high school student, one of several who were also at this moment standing on the street as school had just recently dismissed. The high school students, with mobile phone in their ears, felt no apparent compulsion to protect this youngster as he backed away from me. “You are going to tell me no!! The gall and the sheer impudence of such behavior stuns me” I continued.

To the reader, my own words might sound stunning. How can a teacher speak to a child in this manner? I should add that to be honest, I am not sure exactly what I say when I take on this persona. But, it is a kind of persona and I feel I have portrayed it pretty well here. Is there rage? Yes, there is. I am in a rage at that time and I feel it a bit as I write. It is this emotional tone that provides me the choice words I seem to find. But, at the same time, I can say it is an act. I am not, in that act, defending my self or my pride. I proceed with reckless abandon, dismissive of personal consequences with only a pity for the child who has such a distorted view of what is acceptable and possible in the world as well as the other children who I am unable to attend to because of this misbehaving child. I am acting in the belief that just as falling from a bicycle teaches a child about a certain kind of reality, so also some children need to encounter a caring raging adult. It is not much different from the therapeutic effect of encounters with raw nature, whether it be a bear in the woods, a fall from a tree or a twisted ankle. Modern institutions, especially Canadian ones, often shelter children from encounters with the more vigorous aspects of nature and in some cases with some students, it is exactly this encounter that a student needs.

What was the outflow of this aggressive action on my part? The child from that point on and throughout the year displayed the same kind of politeness and reasonableness expected of all children in school. I do not mean that he was a perfect angel, nor did I expect him to be. He had plenty of bad social habits that he learned by being commander in chief to his maid. But there were no more displays of defiance. If I saw him leaning in that direction, I would give him a look and he would snap out of it. In my classes I want children to challenge norms and question any number of things including authority, but mindless and self centered defiance has no place. I was hoping to save this child from self-destruction. He understood and flourished in my class after this. In addition, his father met me during parent teacher interviews and directed praise toward

me. He told me his son likes me very much and feels that he is learning more than with his other teachers. This is very fortunate, because Kuwaiti parents have been known to have teachers kicked out of the country for less, or worse have their exit Visas revoked (a kind of – in country – house arrest).

I have only enacted such rage three times in my 20 year teaching career, so it demonstrates how much I ration such behaviors, but I do see them as necessary in some cases. In each case that I have done so, I experienced a follow up successful engagement with that student for the remainder of the year that I was working with them. Often this was after other teachers had quit their jobs, or been fired, for failure to succeed as I had. When I shared these experiences with the teachers during the staff meeting, someone commented that it is a balance. I replied “Exactly, and this is where the art comes in. There is no science that prepares a person for this sort of caring encounter with a child. It calls for what Elliot Eisner identifies as judgement in the absence of a rule (Eisner, 2002). Further, if we cannot be truly angry, how can our joyful embrace, acceptance and encouragement of the student be any more real? With such an attitude, how can we avoid the artificial and phoney care that young people so easily identify?”

Canadian education is very hesitant to accept any actions such as what I have just described. As I shared with my Chinese friend, Canadians feel that if you just follow the established procedures carefully laid out by the experts there should be no reason to get upset. If the procedures do not work, there must be something wrong with the practitioner. So, for me, a return to Canada is going to require a re-acclimation to more than merely the cool climate of modern Canada.

Included in this trance is a feeling of specialness that Canadians, especially those from British Columbia, tend to feel particularly those who live on Vancouver island. If one is

searching for evidence of this feeling of privilege just Google *British Columbia the best place on earth* and you will see the pride and promotion of British Columbia that only recently has been rebranded with symbols of mountains and sun only. If we are the best place on earth, then naturally it is for the world to learn from us. Other nations too have this sense of privilege. Kuwaitis who are rich by dint of oil that has sometimes flowed without pumping from their desert sands believe it is a sign of God's special benevolence to them and their unique status. Americans have their doctrine of American Exceptionalism and Manifest Destiny granting them the feeling that they are on this planet to lead the nations. Canadians have their own version of this and I am reluctant to re-immense myself in the Canadian version because elements of it chafe too much. And, by the way, it is this artificial sense of things that I think Korean parents, likewise are chafed by, when they encounter the Canadian culture imbedded in BC educational practices. My Chinese friend has been told by other Chinese compatriots that Canadians are spoiled. Their human interests are sustained only by the natural wealth they have inherited and when the wealth is gone, soon the human values will follow. It is only a strong economy that produces a humane culture. Yet, isn't this money equals happiness argument, also a trance?

What about me? What is the trance that helps me to endure? I was prepared to take a vow of poverty earlier in my life as I once considered going into Christian ministry. I have always preferred to be happy, rather than seek money. Is my inner worldly trance of happiness a peculiarly Canadian, spoiled and privileged mode of thought? I don't know. Thais, in comparison to Canadians, are not nearly as wealthy, and by many indications seem much happier than those of other cultures. It is not an accident that Thailand is referred to as the land of smiles. My Thai wife tells me that the Thai economic philosophy is grounded in the principle of sufficiency. It seems possible to have a sufficiency lifestyle and remain happy. Many years of

Thai experience, both in rural communities and in the city, has convince me that the relatively poor citizens of Thailand are much happier than many of the wealthier nations I have lived in, including Canada. Being in Thailand supports my general rejection of the argument that national wealth equals the happiness of citizens.

However, as much as I am reluctant and as sad as it makes me feel to possibly return home, there are aspects of Canadian culture of which I share pride along with all other Canadians. There are reasons for which I delight in being a representative of our culture to any in the world who would seek to learn from Canadian teachers and curriculum. I believe Canadians do have something to teach the world. We welcome and are represented by a diverse population. We have learned to get along with each other. We do not expect immigrants to become more Canadian, we expect Canadians to become more multicultural. With such a record of success it does not seem out of place to believe that we have something to teach the world. In a world that is growing exponentially smaller because of population growth, transportation, communication and real time encounters with anyone anywhere in the world, pressure increases for a new global community. There are many places in the world where the pressure to accept our international neighbours is responded to with violence, exploitation, abuse and neglect. There is a danger, now more than ever before, we might destroy each other with our inability to get along.

I agree with O'Reilley that like the rabbit we all fall under different trances as a means to endure and somewhat protect ourselves from the bracing effect that a naked encounter with reality might have. Many of us may not be capable of staring into the abyss without flinching. In fact, perhaps it is not really possible to see life as it is. We simply do not view things as they are, scientifically speaking – all atoms and energy. So, we fall under our trances. It is better, I believe, to bear as much reality as possible, but it seems that the Canadian trance, and in

particular the British Columbia trance that is imbedded in its curriculum is far more healthy than others I have seen. In Korea, for example, the desire to drive children toward a form slavery in academic cotton mills, leading often to the point of suicide is by contrast a rather unhealthy trance not only for their own children but for the special needs children that get pressured to leave school because somehow they disturb the peace too much. Tolerance of diversity is still a far off goal for Korean families. It does not even seem desired. Such students are a threat to the intense desire among the “normal” students (or at least their parents) to succeed. Conformity to an idealized model of the good citizen, the one educated in the best universities, is still dominant and woe to those who threaten it. Is it time for Korea to change trances? Certainly, those attending Canadian offshore schools will be so required.

One thing I am feeling quite incompetent with is the idea of having to respond to the tiniest sensitivities of parents. Normally in schools I have been in, the teacher has basically been the boss. Parents can complain, but what are they going to do? Education rolls on like a benign steam roller. But here in Korea, just the smallest thing and parents will leave. This requires quite a different mentality for teachers. There is an aesthetic factor too. A lot of Canadian teachers just feel that things shouldn't be too serious. It should be very friendly and accommodating and no problem is too big to break the essence of good will. And if things get too serious or too uptight, we Canadian teachers rebel against it or flee from it. Koreans are just the opposite. If we are too light hearted, too easy – parents will flee from it. The business piece of school is about accommodating to the demands of parents in ways that it just wouldn't naturally come to the minds of a British Columbia educator. I don't think a public school educated principal has much hope in this highly volatile environment. The trances are too different.

These days I feel self conscious as a principal and it all relates to my willingness to live on the edge. Part of me likes to push boundaries. I like to have a certain amount of tension at work. I feel something is wrong if there isn't a little bit of edginess in my relationships. Like the bear in my chapter four poem, I like to walk along the border wood. This means making decisions where solutions are not crystal clear and it means also experimenting on the edge of morality and ethics too. Linstead (2000) calls this "breaching the limits of the everyday" as a form of play in organizational life. Here we "find ways of remaining on the margin, in touch with the sacred, on the edge of madness, insight and rebirth through the *wounds* which are afforded by the poetic moment" (Linstead, 2000, p. 81).

In the summers, I go to Thailand where I own a house. There we have a kitchen, two bedrooms, a living area and a dining room. There we have nice furniture and a deck outside where we can sit and watch the clouds float by. It is the modern day version of a cabin at the lake. I love it there. It is a retreat.

Something else I love about Thailand is its strangeness. I first noticed it when I heard some raucous cheering at a school near the apartment where my wife and I once stayed the summer in Bangkok. Someone was shouting loudly and a crowd of voices shouted back. It sounded like a pep rally and the leader was energizing the crowd. All this I heard through our open window. I got up, went out of the apartment and followed the sound. As I came around a corner, I discovered that the leader, a spectacle in his own right and thus able to ramp up the crowd, was a man, with hairy legs, and a skirt and high heels. He is an example of the Ladyboy culture that is both unacceptable to Thais but at the same time totally embraced. Unacceptable in the sense that Thais are a conservative culture who do not believe that there is anything but pure

male or pure female, but at the same time they are accepting of all life as any Buddhist would be. So, there is this allowance given to anything that is outside the norm because at the heart of it is life, and life must be revered.

Recently, the Thai media have been telling the story of an actor who has adopted a toy doll. But this is no quiet and obscure adoption. He claims that he was walking past a shop one day and the doll spoke to him saying “Don’t leave me.” So, he bought the doll and takes it with him everywhere. Anyone who knows about Thailand will be aware that there is a strong spirit of animism in the country. There are tree spirits, house spirits, and all the Buddhas, which to us may be merely decorative or ornamental, but Thais believe to be animated by spirits. My wife puts out a bottle of soda to feed the house spirit when we are in Thailand and after the bottle empties in a week or so of hot sunshine she gets another bottle and replaces the full one with the one that has been emptied. My wife, by the way, who is Thai is also Doctor of Physiology who knows all about the processes of the human body and the experimental methods by which we arrive at the facts of our experience and sometimes looks askance at the fact that I am doing an autoethnography. Never the less, monks bless houses, trees and Buddhas and it is well understood that the spirits abide. This actor in Thailand believes the same about his doll. The actor gets people to take care of the doll while he is working. He once booked a seat on the airplane for his doll! I imagine what it would be like for someone sitting on the opposite side observing as this man talks to the doll and puts the seat belt on it and generally cares for it.

The point of these stories for me, is I love it! It is very postmodern. I love this descent (ascent?) into the irrational or at least non-rational. There is a humour here and a defiance of convention that creates space for living undefined. It is like pushing the reset button on our moralities and saying, OK let’s start again. The main point is that all life should be respected.

But I am a teacher, and a principal. What am I, many would argue, if not a guardian for the rational development of children? Yet I come to my work from the standpoint that everything is up for grabs. All of it, with the exception of two basics: freedom and respect for life (Gardiner, 1997). I perform conventionality at work just the same as I perform extroversion. But, I am far from conventional. I often tell colleagues, “If you knew me when I was young, you would be stunned.” I am like the poet in the *Poet and the Lunatics* (1929) by G.K. Chesterton. I can understand the lunacy of this world enough to meet the students where they are at (at least I seem to be more proficient than many of my colleagues have been) but I am somehow able to draw those students from straying way off into some hallway of the mind and return to a sense of what we all perceive as normal. But what would happen if I were to, one day, get lost also? What would happen if I decide that crazy is OK? What if my foot slips and that dark tide rolls in and overwhelms me? And I suppose I fear this more now that I have a family, and yet I feel at the same time that it is a kind of moral to keep all discussions open. Let’s talk about the doll carrying man. What of it?

And, talk is one thing. Action is another. I feel it is a moral requirement to break barriers of expectation. It creates space for everyone. But what would the captains of right and wrong say about this? This is the struggle in my heart as a principal. I have my own quirks, my own strangeness which I do not care to show. I sorely wish we could somehow move away from our various categories of right and wrong, with all their regulatory measures and adopt a soft or compassionate morality. Donald Trump and those like him frighten me in this regard.

“In autoethnography, we peer into social issues and problems through the lens of our own experiences. Our vulnerability and exposure are the price of seeing something insightful or profound” (Tamas, 2013, p. 187). Yes, if I look at this through the two way mirror as both a lens

on experience as well as a reflection about myself there is something here to be said about how culture itself is shaping me. It is telling me to live a contradiction. On one hand, I should be radical and challenging, *Question Everything*, I recall seeing on a t-shirt back home. Yet it is also calling me to be conformist with all its laws and regulations. In other words, be radical and challenging about those things it says I can be radical and challenging about, but I dare not be radical or challenging of anything that represents the current cultural totems.

Perhaps this is one secret to social life? If I look at my experience as a lens on culture then perhaps my experience is typical of everyone. Perhaps every one of us has these patterns of behaviour that do not fit the norm, that we wish to keep hidden and others might wish to punish? Is it possible that Kanin, my mother, Phunee, former lovers etc. all have their own tendencies that are destructive in some sense? Is this the best way to understand the concept of sin? And should I not take violent control of some of my worst eccentricities lest someone else feel so compelled to do it for me? Or, should I fight to create the space that allows for everyone to have their own eccentricities? Like Eugene Peterson (1997a) says our lives are “a complex web of interconnecting sins and mercies” (Peterson, 1997a, p. 195). Perhaps O’Reilly (2000) would say illness and wellness. The point here, is that those sins and mercies, illnesses and wellnesses are implicated in the cultures we travel in. We are as much products as producers of the cultures we abide in and their trances.

According to Michael Mann as cited in Bogotch, Beachum, Blount, Brooks, & English (2008), “the creation of social power historically is largely accidental” (Bogotch et al., 2008, p. 121). If this is true, it would follow that the social injustice that results from the creation of social power is correspondingly accidental. It comes about through accidental sets of convergences and can sometimes last hundreds of years and at some points are not even conceived of as social

injustice. Just so, each person, each school and each country has its own unique challenges. It would be logical to conclude that the task for leadership is not to find the pattern (there is none, according to Michael Mann), nor to impose a pattern (this would create new injustices) but to read or interpret the times. And then bring what? Do what as leaders? Perhaps it would be to lead people, as Jung did, to individuation as a result of the reconciliation that good therapy brings.

I have boarded the plane in Vancouver, and switched my watch back to my own Korean time zone and am typing while flying to Hong Kong.

“Critical consciousness is developed through a process of dialogics – an iterative process of discovery and learning between people. The result of educating students in a dialogical tradition is the development of conscientização, a form of critical consciousness characterized by “learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality” (Freire, 1970)” (Bogotch, et al., 2008, p. 75).

I feel like I am developing that conscientização with both my mother and Canada. When I was looking for work the other day at one of the local Universities, in British Columbia I conducted a couple of informational interviews. I asked the gentleman at the University of Victoria if they did international education which the proud answer was of course they do, citing the numbers of different countries they have students come from. I should have asked however if they teach international education, as a topic. I think, that in all likelihood they are not thinking like this at all about international education as a subject, but merely as a source for clients.

Likewise, with my mother who likes to bring up the need to be in a job with a union. She is almost hell bent on getting me persuaded of the benefits of unions: job security, regular pay increases etc. Yet, somehow she doesn't see that one reason I have not had such a job is that I have not been accepted into, nor do I easily accept that crowd. There is a kind of "company man" appearance you need to take on in a unionized job in Canada, a sort of politeness. I wish I could describe it. It is as if everyone were working in a cheerful hot tub. Just such friendly, smiling deference is given to one another. But, what if my manner is not so deferential? What if I am a bit experimental in my aims and attitudes with others?

Interestingly, as I was in the airport preparing for departure I was talking on the mobile phone with my wife. After talking for about 40 minutes and then hanging up, someone across the way said "Thanks for talking on the phone so loud."

What? Was I in a library? "Well, thanks for mentioning it just now" was my reply. "It doesn't really help much after the fact does it?"

He was annoyed and you could feel his temper rising as I approached him. He showed me how he was signalling with his hands for me to quiet down, "You were looking right at me," he said.

I simply replied, "I am sorry, I really didn't see anything." I broke off the conversation right there thinking this conversation is too strange.

He continued "You couldn't see two people sitting behind you leaving because you were too loud?" Actually I did notice that I thought to myself. But why would they be annoyed with my volume? Why so sensitive? And wasn't I there first anyway? I certainly didn't get it, nor was I interested in fighting over it. But this does indicate something about the manners and expectations in Canada or the west. All I could think was - would they shush me if I, my wife

and son were sitting there and having a good laugh over something and my son perhaps jumping and shouting a bit?

Freire saw society as marked by severe oppression and poverty, and in education found both the root of the problem and a solution. He called the predominant educational paradigm of his time the banking concept of education. This banking concept entailed "... an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiqués and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat... the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing, and sorting the deposits" (Freire, 1970)" (Bogotch, et al., 2008, p. 74-75). But interestingly this is how I see Canada. We determine through studies that not wearing seatbelts causes more deaths in car accidents and so we make a law and every child needs to be in a car seat up to the age of 12. There is no debate here. We are given the information, we receive the information, understand the arithmetic and we obey it, or we pay a price. This really disturbs me. Why do we turn the results of studies into law? Law that has penalties attached? Laws that overrule other forms of caring action such as my son is sick and needs to be held by human hands not safety belts? Why has safety superseded care as a value, punishable by law? Is Canada losing its balance?

"People educated in such a system lose their humanity. They become unthinking automatons that accept whatever those above them in the institutionalized hierarchy present as valid or truthful. Freire believed that the way forward for oppressed peoples of the world was through the development of critical consciousness, or "the state of seeing one's position in life and the conditions in which one lives as neither unalterable nor inevitable" (Freire, 1973; DeMarrais & LeCompte, 1999)" (Bogotch, et al., 2008, p. 75). Yes, but change at what price?

Yesterday, my wife Phunee asked Kanin to show me what he did at school. Kanin came and plopped a paper in front of me. On top was Kanin's name in his recognizable scrawl, the date, and below that a list of 10 blanks in two columns numbering down one to five in the first column and six to ten in the second column. Beside these numbers, were short handwriting guide-lines, a solid line on top and bottom, and a dotted line in the middle for young children to follow in their formation of letters. Numbers one to four and numbers six to nine were all circled, indicating the spelling of the word was correct. Number five and ten had stars on them, indicating incorrect. At the bottom was the fraction eight over ten, another star and the happy face accompanied by the comment – Good! My heart sunk when I saw this paper. My son, who is still in Kindergarten has been numbered and labelled. Eight out of ten, good. I wept inwardly but outwardly exclaimed “Nice work!” and promptly set the paper aside, while Phunee exclaimed her pride. Kanin looked uncertain what to say and we soon changed the topic.

I have been thinking about this moment ever since. I realize I am in the middle of a completely different mind set about schooling. In Korea, and perhaps southeast Asia generally this is a kind of coming of age moment, the equivalent of losing a first tooth. I spoke with a trusted colleague Wanda Douglas about this. Wanda is the first grade teacher at our school. “I experienced quizzes from the point of view of the parent the other day” I ventured. “I have to confess my heart sunk as soon as I saw the quiz.”

“Uh oh” said one of my other colleagues Markus. “Did he do badly?”

“No, he did fine. Eight out of ten. But what bothered me is he is still in Kindergarten and he has already been numbered. Learning has suddenly become a quantity.”

Wanda answered my concern saying “So instead of the simple pleasure of learning now he is performing for grades.”

“Exactly,” I replied relieved that she understood.

“I am not sure I even give quizzes in grade one. We just do fun learning activities.”

“Exactly! This is totally the issue. I worry that he is going to compare himself to others rather than just enjoy learning. I don’t want him to perform learning.”

She said “Did you ask him how he feels about it?”

“No,” I replied. “To be honest, I think I was so stunned when I saw it that I didn’t know what to say.”

“Maybe you can ask him and find out what his feeling is. He might not be bothered by it at all.”

“Yeah, I suppose you are right. I will check with him today.”

This is how we ended the conversation and later in the day I did approach Kanin. We were eating dinner and I got up, found the quiz and placed it in front of Kanin. I asked him “Kanin, how do you feel about this quiz?”

“Good.”

“Really? Why?”

“Dadda, what does a star mean?”

“A star is put on each word that was done wrong.”

Silence. I filled the silence with my own feelings. “Just so you know Kanin, I don’t care what the score is on the quiz. All I care is whether you tried your best or not.” But even as I said these words, I knew I didn’t mean that either. How do you explain to a child about to get caught in the web of comparisons that while you do not wish for him to have his identity framed around

the grading of quizzes, you never the less want him to do his best with everything he does? The problem is, what if everything he does is quizzes?

“Just do your best, and don’t bother to compare yourself with others.”

That’s when my wife spoke up, laughing. “Oh, mamma already asked him how other students did.”

My wife, sees it as natural to play the game of comparisons. It is her culture. Perhaps the same as Koreans. JJ said to me recently. “If you have a car and you see your neighbour has two, you are still happy right?”

I replied, “Right.”

“For Koreans no” JJ explained. “They will complain, why does the neighbour have two? I should have two also.”

I keep telling myself, three more months of Kindergarten, then summer holidays and then safe in our BC school where we do not even give homework for the first three years.

Yet, even as I go through this personal turbulence. I remind myself again of something I have openly acknowledged several times. I have seen in my own life how I have learned lessons in the context of nurture as well as challenge. Hedonism as well as Stoicism. Free play as well as the bruises that result from encounters with gravity. When raising our son, I have seen my wife shrieking at our son. I have seen the look of terror and confusion on his face. Thankfully such events do not take place often, but I feel that both have their place. I do not attempt to correct my wife, or challenge her approach. I feel my son needs to know there are lions in the jungle and where better than to learn it first hand at home? I seem to recall CS Lewis speaking somewhere of how much he learned from the trials and suffering of his early schooling. Yet, for me, the idea of grading is just too early. My son, is not at the stage of understanding and what I fear is that his

capability to enjoy and benefit from real, lasting and impactful learning will be hindered by the introduction of a performative approach to learning. I do not want my son to perform it. I simply want him to be fascinated by and challenged with life. Challenged so that he may assert some mastery over some element of the world and shape it, and be shaped by it. I desire the same for anyone and everyone, most especially our students and their teachers.

Martin Buber says there are two types of freedom, outer and inner (Senge et al, 2004, p. 223). This sounds helpful. Outer freedom is described as being free to act as we please in the sense that no one is controlling us. Inner is being free from the control of our own habit formations. It is interesting to note this one, because I would never have felt that I was under any inner controls till now. In fact, I always took sanctuary in my inner world and contrasted my external world with my inner world. “The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit” John 3:8 (New Revised Standard Version). However, Buber is saying that we can be imprisoned by our inner self. When I read this, something in me cringed. Something in me did not want to hear this. There was a perceived threat that I may need to slay some old habit and it was going to be painful. Much as if I were to remove a partially developed parasitic twin.

Interestingly my readings these last days have been reaffirming for me this need to acquire inner freedom. Beginning with Senge et al. (2005) who goes on to say “I believe the freedom Buber is talking about is... the awakened awareness that I am now free to do whatever is required to contribute toward my destiny, less constrained by past habits” (Senge et al, 2005, p. 223). This is interesting. What do I need to do to contribute to my destiny? Not sure. Do I

have any habits that that prevent me from moving toward my destiny? Has some inner part of me fossilized and is no longer responsive to the conditions?

It is near the end of my second year and I am at the place of considering if I should sign another contract or not. With the end of the dissertation coming and a few job applications in, I feel I should have a good chance landing a job in one of the smaller universities back in Canada. Whether or not I am accurate about my job prospects, the chance of returning to Canada has me rethinking my relationship with mother's land. I suppose the happiest years of my life have been lived outside of Canada. I have been enjoying the international life. But, I do miss the landscape and when I think about returning, my heart gets excited about the mountains and the sea. I would prefer to live on one of the coasts, east coast or west, it doesn't really matter too much to me, they would both be beautiful.

When I think about returning to Canada, I get a sinking feeling. It is much like the feeling I had once when I returned to the small prairie city of Regina where I had once lived. No matter where I went during my week's stay there, I felt as if I were in insect pinned to a board - stuck! I couldn't breath. Everything felt suffocating and immobile. When I think about returning to Canada now, despite how much I love the land, I also get this feeling of asphyxiation. I have often wondered why I feel this way. Many times I have asked myself, what is it about Canada that irritates me so much? What is at the root of my love hate relationship?

I was posing a question to my wife and it relates to what I have written already. I asked her, to suppose that there are three people. The first one is poor but is jealous of the rich. The second one is rich but is jealous of his neighbour's wife. The third one is poor and accepts his condition. Who has more power? My wife said, the poor person who accepts his condition. I

agreed with her. Individual power resides in finding contentment regardless of one's circumstances, not the control of one's external circumstances. Our world seems by all appearances to be increasingly incapable of living in contentment. Certainly in my own years of growing up, I believe I was taught to be discontented. I almost consider the education of discontent to be malpractice.

However, these thoughts led (somehow) to my questioning why I have enjoyed living in so many different cultures. I believe the answer lies in the fact that in other cultures I have not been expected to conform to the social norms. I have been a visible minority in Kuwait, Korea and Thailand and thus I am not expected to be the same. I am quite comfortable with this. In fact, it leads to interesting conversations. My employer, for example, would not say to me "The teachers do not work hard enough. It is clear by how little they take their students' work seriously." Instead, he would say, "In Canada, what is the attitude to homework? I would reply that in Ontario there are legal sanctions against giving it and in BC there are guidelines. I produce the guidelines, explain them and await his reply. "In Korea," he would say "parents believe their children must suffer the weight of their school work. It should not be easy. Parents expect teachers to give a lot of homework." What is interesting is there is this assumption of difference which forms the basis of a conversation. The social game is made an object for conscious discussion and there is no expectation that I should know the rules of the game or follow them, or if I do follow them, it is given to me as a credit. I have found this many many times in overseas situations. Or, often, certain matters don't even gain a mention, whether it is foreigners' lack of discretion in public places (which would be ignored), or their pushiness (which would be tolerated) or their sloppy manner which would be quietly disregarded. But, in most cases, I find a kind of tolerance and patience with difference. I do not find this in Canada,

oddly enough. Yes, in Canada we are very tolerant of difference when it comes to other cultures. I myself have boasted that there are over 200 different languages spoken in Canada. We are diverse and tolerance is a point of pride, but in my experience if you are Canadian born and you wish to be other than normal yourself – for example, you wish to be introverted and avoid any requirement to join the social competition, or you wish not to put a seat belt on your child, or you wish to act in a manner that runs counter to the social norm you face a kind of social sanction. You will get lectured, or aggressively ignored, or whispered about maliciously, or punished in some other manner. There is a code of polite manners expected of all Canadians that I have never quite understood and I fear that the gap has only increased the more I have been away. Perhaps it is more accurate to say I have just not found myself in much agreement with the code and this has led to my present hesitance to return.

So another thing I am thinking about is the mentality of procedures, for example in discipline at school. I often have the feeling that at VCA teachers would be perfectly happy if I just gave them the procedures so that if a student does x, y, and z we would have procedure a, b and c to correspond as a discipline policy. And in a way that is how the school was when I got there. For me, yes I think there should be a procedure but it should be individual, it should be different in each class, it should not be standard across the board, because what it is ultimately about is the relationships not the rules. I feel that those people who just want clearly defined rules are avoiding the challenge of relationship. When I was at my school in Kuwait, I always wanted my procedures to be a little obscure to the other teachers. I didn't want them to know what my procedures were because I was afraid they would borrow my relational methods and turn it into a kind of mockery as the relational method by degrees just turned into another

technique. I feared this would undermine the quality of my relations with my students. My genuine offering of relationship would become viewed as an off the shelf product. I would no longer be offering myself, but just some proxy.

One of the discussion points during the staff meeting was a particular line in the list of British Columbia professional standards that teachers are accountable for. The first standard for which teachers in British Columbia are accountable is the standard of care. The second standard is one of being an ethical and honest role model. The line we discussed during this meeting was the line that states “Educators are accountable for their conduct on duty, as well as off duty, where their conduct has an effect on the education system” (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2016, p. 4).

We did a numbered heads discussion, an idea I derived from Garmston and Wellman (1999). Each group was to carry on a discussion about this line of the professional standards and at intervals of every few minutes I would call out a number and whoever in that group was designated by that number would have to summarize the conversation. Aurore was called upon to summarize the second time. “This means that when we are off duty we need to dress more professionally.”

One of the teachers replied, “I don’t think it really means about the way we dress. I mean, I suppose if I was seen by a student in T-shirt and sweats I might be embarrassed but should that make an impact on my job?”

I piped up. “The interesting thing to me is that a normal expectation you often hear is that one should not bring one’s personal life to the work place. Yet, in this description it is assumed

that we can bring the work place into our personal lives. I have trouble swallowing this kind of thinking.”

Faye spoke up. “Yeah, the whole time we were on the Ontario trip I was conscious of this. I would be dressed a certain way and then I would think, ‘Oh, I can’t do that’ or my mother would say “Faye what are you thinking? You need to conduct yourself as a teacher. You are not on your off time. Like, what would happen Kelly if I went out drinking, or someone found the art I was making which involves a lot of sensual images and suppose one of our students saw me or got a hold of my work what would happen?”

I replied, “The professional standards are considered on one hand as ideals to strive for which no one ever fulfills completely. However, they are also considered regulatory, which is to say that one can be disciplined for not fulfilling their requirements. Discipline amounts to being reported to the ministry which investigates and then delivers whatever consequences they deem appropriate which may be removal or suspension of your licence and basically the end of your career. Not only that but they report to all the other provinces the removal of your license and the cause for this removal.” I could see some aghast looks on the faces of those around the room and a corresponding silence.

“But, you as a principal. What would you do in such a case? For example, being caught drunk and then a student sees that and tells her parents who then get angry and report to the principal? What would you do?”

“I... I... hmmm, I’m not sure to be honest. It is a kind of ethical dilemma. I suppose it becomes very contextual. For example, if you could say that 80% of the school community were 80% convinced that you did harm to the school, then I suppose I would have to report you. But I

am very reluctant to do so. I just feel that this is a kind of overreach. Yet at the same time there is a responsibility that one carries in these matters and it needs to be taken seriously.”

We picked it up again while driving in the van. Brant was beside me, stone silent as usual. Brant is a very polite teacher but I believe he regards me as incompetent. He always seems to be the first to comment if I make some error of omission when sending general messages to teachers on emails. Or, when I make schedules, he comes with a list of suggestions that would either require major or minor alterations. He has a point of view, and I respect it. He has helped me to improve in a number of significant ways. However, when it comes to the sort of changes I call for he bristles. I am very much focussed on the experience of being a student and an educator and this is much of what I mean by balancing the art with the science. By his stony silence on these matters I can tell he thinks this is just “theory” and people should not be required to waste time on such matters. His interest is in basic practicalities.

As we were driving I recalled one of the items for which someone got a penalty from the BC ministry. “I remember an incident that was reported in *Learn* magazine” I said as I turned looking backward toward the rest of the staff breaking the general silence that sometimes takes over on the drive home. “Do you want to hear it?”

“Sure,” someone said.

“I had read in the spring issue of *Learn* (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2016) magazine of a man who had left an offensive and insulting message on voice mail to the district payroll clerk. He was reprimanded and expected to complete a course on emotional intelligence as a result.

Faye replied “Do you guys ever read that magazine?”

“What magazine?”

“*Learn*, the one Kelly’s talking about. Oh, you should. It comes out every month. As soon as it comes out I go straight to the back. You can’t believe how they go into the name and shame. I mean, they really get into it. But you hear about all this terrible stuff like teachers coming on to their students or posting things online. It’s a real gossip column. But it also completely freaks me out.”

“Yeah, I wonder how they make their determinations. It is like court minutes. And these decisions can affect careers,” I replied.

“Its like what you were talking about Kelly. Where does your personal life end and your professional life begin? It seems we are being invaded by our jobs. I feel I have to keep my activities so secret. Like emails for example. I never ever say anything even slightly personal in emails. You never know who might see them. You or JJ or anyone might gain access and what if I get reported?”

“Yes, that’s why you guys never answer my socially oriented emails. It is so totally different from when I was working in Kuwait. We used to share funny jokes etc. all the time. Sometimes they had a bit of suggestive edge to them as well which is funny considering we were in conservative Arab country and many of the teachers were Arabs. But here, in a Canadian school where we are supposed to have such liberty, when I send a link to a music video to all of you and say this is awesome what do you think, no one replies!”

“Yeah, I was tempted to say something, but I just felt too much of a chill.” There were murmurs of agreement in the van from the other teachers. I found myself respecting Faye even more today as she seemed finally to be speaking her mind and I appreciated what came out of it. She is a sincere and dedicated teacher who is full of life and art. By this I mean passion. She has

probably seen the darker side of life as well and I think she finds the restrictions of the profession to be somewhat life denying as I do.

“The problem with normative morality” I piped in, “is that it is based on a norm. Meaning, that it is a morality that is based on the average of moralities so to speak. Once this norm is determined however, how can you then turn it around and use it as an expectation? We somehow celebrate the range when it comes to honoring different cultures, but when it comes to educators and being complete human beings, we simply adhere to the mean. In other words, given a range of behaviors that are normal in this particular community, find and attain to the middle. How more mediocre can anyone get? Anyone who is an outlier from that mean may be subject to discipline. It is completely illogical.”

“The thing is, we encourage students to think for themselves and make decisions independently and not be swayed by whatever is considered the current culture, yet as teachers we cannot do that. Aren’t we as teachers supposed to model appropriate behavior? Is it conformism we are teaching by our professional expectations?” Faye went on. “I remember when I was doing my practicum I worked with an art teacher who had her hair coloured in rainbow colours but I wouldn’t dare make such a step myself.”

Another teacher Morton said “I think there is a kind of economy of factors. Like if she is a really good teacher and she has gained the respect of the community then she earns extra credits in the minds of people and they can accept her eccentricities where they might not accept it from others. “Right,” Faye said. “Like if you are often late for work, dress like a slob and then colour your hair it just seems like one more element of rebelliousness or lack of professionalism.”

On the way to work the other day we had a discussion in the van and I have been thinking about it ever since. A few weeks previous on Teacher's Day, one of the parents dropped off some packages for all the teachers who worked with his children including me. The packages included some highly rated skin lotions for the woman teaching his daughter and the same brand of lotions, only specially designed for men, given to another male teacher who taught his son, and myself the principal. I opened the discussion by looking over my shoulder to Markus and asked him if he had tried the lotions yet.

"Yeah, once" he replied speaking in his usual side of his mouth manner. Markus, the man who plays first base and is captain of the baseball team using facial cream.

"Ha, ha! You too? I also tried them once. Do you think you will use them again?"

"Ahmm..." he said, letting his thought hang in the air. "It seemed all right. I wasn't sure which lotion I was supposed to use first."

"It depends on the viscosity of the cream" Faye said. "You need to put low viscosity on first because it absorbs the quickest. Then you follow with the higher viscosity. I really love Korean lotions I think they're great."

"Yeah..." Markus said again. "Its really hard to tell which is which."

"I told Phunee I wasn't going to use them again and she seemed quite disappointed. She said she thought I didn't care about my look any more. I just don't like creams that's all. Never have. Even sunscreen and mosquito repellent. I would much rather stay indoors than put mosquito repellent on."

Aaron piped in and said, "Yeah, I really don't like that creamy sunscreen also but I don't mind the spray, but I know what you mean. Even the spray leaves a kind of filmy soapy feeling on your skin."

“Yep. And as far as the skin creams go, I just cannot believe their effectiveness.”

“Oh, you have to use them on a regular basis,” Faye continued. “It is not a one-time fix. You have to use them regularly over a long period of time. Korean skin lotions are some of the best I have ever had. They are pretty serious about their skin care here. The sheet masks are especially good. They keep my skin hydrated and keep a really good texture.” Faye continued on this vein describing her procedures and which products she is more inclined to use and I was entirely lost.

“Imagine a fundamentalist Christian talking to an atheist,” I said to Faye and you will understand how what you are saying now is so completely outside my range of understanding. It is like you are talking about a world of make believe to me.”

Once again, I silenced the conversation in the van. I often do this.

“You know what?” I suddenly said. “It just dawned on me that long long ago I made the conscious decision against cosmetics. The main point for me was, and I guess remains, how can anyone develop a face with character if they are all neutralizing their appearance with products?” Once, again modernity is removing distinctiveness in favour of regression to the mean. And, people pay for it! And when I think of it this way, I realize how far apart our worlds really are.

I began to realize the philosophical implications of my thinking as a human being and as an educator. That means that I am much more interested in students developing their character and distinctiveness by taking on the marks of the world as they interact with it. I am not looking for cosmetic repair, or a return to the original purity and safety of the womb. In fact, I expect there to be some damage that takes place as a part of the process of learning and growing. I expect children to fall off their bicycles so they can learn the limits that govern nature and their bodies within and a part of nature. Someone who is serious about ballet will surely suffer

bruising to their toes. Someone who plays guitar will develop calloused skin on their finger pads. And, those students who will challenge life the most, will take greater risks and develop greater marks on their bodies and character than would be had from merely falling off a bicycle. Why would I want to remove these distinctive marks of experience in the world with ointments and other treatments? This is what identifies us as humans participating in life: affecting it and being affected by it.

I met with PAC today. There were three parents: Aunt of Caiden, Mother of Celestina, and Mother of Daniel. The procedure was supposed to be that I meet with the Chair of PAC and before this takes place, the PAC group would meet to discuss issues with a teacher present. This never happens however. What happens instead is that the entire PAC wishes to speak with me and the most recent meeting the chair of PAC did not even attend. So, it is not working out as I expected. However, I must say that this recent meeting was very warm and congenial. The PAC shared a number of issues that are a concern to parents, particularly parents of younger students. For each of their concerns I had something to say by way of reflection and my response met with nods, note taking and sounds of “Ahhhh, I see, I understand.” I spoke with Aida after this meeting asking her what she felt the mood of the meeting was. She said it seemed really positive. Such a change from two years ago when I first started as a principal and the aunt of Caiden asked me what my views of forming a PAC were - the very day that four staff resigned and I was threatened with a lawsuit. This was a very affirming moment nine days into June of my second year as a principal. On this same day, I fired my first teacher. Technically, I did not fire her. It was simply denying a renewal of contract. The line I used was “You have a future in teaching,

but no longer will it be with us.” Interestingly, it went very smoothly. The teacher simply said, “OK.”

I had a dream last night. In that dream I had come home, or to a place that felt very homey. It was Christmas time and someone had sent me a card. It was clear from the card that there was a very caring message contained in it. The person on the other end did not know me but clearly wished me nothing but care and love. She was Catholic. Somehow she had gotten a hold of one of my computers and had accessed some private information of mine. I kept reading the card but could not find out what her exact intention was. I never got to the end of the dream.

Interpretation: Interestingly a Christmas card is a symbol of forgiveness and letting go of the past, reaching out to loved ones and reconnecting to old ties. Christmas itself is representative of new beginnings.

As far as work goes, I think that things could not be much better. This job really suits me. I think I bring an excellent balance to the school. I am starting to think that future challenges will be to assist teachers more with the educational development.

The below is an email I sent as follow-up to a meeting I had with Lawrence.

Hi Lawrence,

For interest I located the quote by Mandela that I referred to in our office discussion.

"Prison and the authorities conspire to rob each man of his dignity. In and of itself, that assured that I would survive, for any man or institution that tries to rob me of my dignity will lose because I will not part with it at any price or under any pressure. I never seriously

considered the possibility that I would not emerge from prison one day. I never thought that a life sentence truly meant life and that I would die behind bars" (Mandela, 1994, p. 464).

A few points to make:

Authority is the issue I think you are dealing with here as well. Interestingly Mandela does not make distinctions. He points out that "each man" is threatened with loss of dignity by the authorities.

Mandela does not give a formula for his strong defense of his own dignity. He points out, rather, that it was threats to his dignity that guaranteed his survival. Apparently defense of dignity provides the emotional power that helps one survive. **[I share Mandela's attitude. No one is going to take my dignity away. I feel mentally oriented to believe that anyone who attempts to do so is in fact the weaker person. Their need to take my dignity away shows their weakness and thus gain my pity as lacking in human quality.]** His optimism also seems to be in the heart of his survival. He never took seriously the sorts of "life prison" size odds he faced.

I am, as I say, not justifying the status quo here in our school. All institutions need to change and become less threatening to a person's dignity, however the discussion we had yesterday was about how were you going to deal with such circumstances during the inevitable times that they arise at various points in your life. I believe this is a life skill, a survival skill more necessary perhaps than the skills of math, science and the arts.

Mandela seems to be the sort of person who can provide serious guidance. He was a real leader who suffered for the sake of the dignity of all people, both oppressors as well as oppressed.

I am also going to share some other thoughts that came to my mind while we were having our discussion. It is about facing our shame. I record several quotes that I wrote down for myself long years ago which helped me in some way. I hope they might be useful for you.

"Embracing our toxic shame can bring about self-revelation and self-love. But confronting our demons is a terrifying prospect. We need courage in order to take the risk. Greek myths often represented self confrontations as a journey into the underworld. They also presented moments of self-revelation in boundary situations where we are at the limits of our sovereignty, where all the protective coverings are stripped off..." (Bradshaw, 1992, p. 256).

[Such as when we are under the scrutiny of a teacher who does not seem to understand our needs and limitations - my thought.]

"We fear the darkness of our soul's inner regions because we are so polarized. Just as we polarize the world outside us, we polarize the world within. We feel that we must be all light with no darkness, that we must be perfectly clear with no confusion. Instead, what we really need is reconciliation..." (Bradshaw, 1992, p. 259.) **[Reconciliation, by the way, was a key to Nelson Mandela's own thought processes. When he was released, he did not seek punishment of his enemies, he sought truth and reconciliation. How we deal with the outer world is also the manner in which we deal with the inner world.]**

"The first stage of recovery (of one's true self) is the recovery of will power and for this one needs to realize choice. We choose the trance we fall under, and we can choose to come out of it" (Bradshaw, 1992, p. 259). **[So, when he mentions trance I am reminded of the recordings that we let play in our mind full of negativity which I have advised before we need to replace with new ones, more suitable and helpful for us... such as "In God I trust, I WILL NOT fear" - my thought.]**

So... Any time you wish to chat about this or any other matter I am always happy to spend more time with you.

Best regards,

Mr. Card

So, what does all this amount to? I recall what David Geoffrey Smith once said “What is important about this research concerns the difference it makes to know it, and the answer has something to do with the imagination” (Smith, 2006, p. 45). He further states that “the lie in modernist versions of education is that, although there is a slim chance that it can make you ‘successful,’ it cannot make you free” (Smith, 2006, p. 12).

When I first began as a vice principal at VCA, after returning from Christmas holidays I asked the usual questions – *What significant events happened in your holiday?* I got the usual responses: went to movies, slept in, spent time with friends etc. One student said she attended Academy. In my innocence I replied, “That’s it? What else did you do?” She replied that there was no time for anything else. To this I replied, “So, how long did you spend at school?” She paused and counted with her fingers and did a little obvious computing in her head, settled on her answer and then replied “About ten hours.” I repeated back to her “Ten hours for what time period, per week?” A bell suddenly rang in my mind that has been ringing continuously since “Ten hours every day.” Wow! I bent my knee and bowed to her in honor. I was shocked at how her holiday was used, not for rest from the demands of school in December but for increased schooling tasks. She spent more time per day at her academy than she did during regular school days at her primary school, the one that would grant certification status. I said to her, that I was

not going to say anything against her parents' decision to send her to this school, but that what she was doing was basically unfathomable by people back home. We take holidays and have a good time and still our measures of success on international test scores rate well in comparison with Korea and other leading nations so it is possible to do well and still not invest so much time within the school walls.

As I reflected on all this I recalled to mind that Wendell Berry (1989) criticized the endless manipulation of the public apparatus, as if better government, economics or law would lead to a better world. Rather, as Agnes Heller conveys, if you want a better world, populate it with better people (Tormey, 1998). This is the ethical argument and the one I side with against the arguments of a better or more streamlined system though we need both.

And yet, I do not deny the pleasure of knowing that my son, who attended a Korean English speaking Kindergarten, is going to enter grade one fully proficient at reading and writing and his social life has expanded greatly as well. This is so much beyond the simple alphabet recitation and shoe lace tying I was able to do when I entered Kindergarten.

A few weeks into my summer holiday JJ contacted me saying he needed me to return to school immediately. He was planning on taking in a number of students who did not want the BC Program and he would like to phase out the BC model. He informed me that a condition of bringing in the new students would require that he also take in new teachers, some of whom were Canadian and some American which means he would need to cancel the contracts of all newly hired teachers and he plans to begin school a week earlier than scheduled. Further, a new curriculum needs to be prepared for the school.

The next day I submitted my resignation.

Chapter 10 – Analysis

Introduction

“How can I tell what I think till I see what I say?” (Forster, 1955). Writing, in this dissertation, is viewed as a form of discovery. Laurel Richardson (1994) says “I write in order to learn something that I didn’t know before I wrote it.” Just as swimming is learned through a thousand subliminal projections and trials and errors while immersed in water (Delpech-Ramey, 2012), so also my writing has been accomplished as a form of immersion in experience. I have enacted my experience, uniting subjective interactions with the objective world, into an artifact that is both real in an objective sense, but as a symbol it also links the author’s subjectivity together with the reader’s subjectivity (Caldecott, 2009).

By capturing subjective experience in the objective world, knowledge is produced in two major ways. The first is accomplished in evocative autoethnographic narrative comprising chapters four through nine and the second is chapter ten where a more traditional form of analysis is completed. Chapters four through nine are a cultural artifact. Taken together, they may be thought of as data chapters. Just as graphs might suffice where statistical analysis is involved, these chapters as narrative function both as data, but also comprise a form of preliminary analysis (Ellis, 1999). But reading a story for information is much different than reading a graph. Strati (1999) says that “evocation is nothing but participant observation conducted in the imagination” (Strati, 1999, p. 14). It takes an individual skilled in empathy to gain full advantage of an evocative rendering and become, through imagination, a participant observer where felt experience becomes real experience (Koenig, 2010). One’s perception and sensory faculties are employed and “aesthetic understanding, ... rather than rational analysis” (Strati, 1999, p. 14) may take place. Further, being a participant observer, the reader “adds

original knowledge to the description” (Strati, 1999, p. 15) and the social construction of knowledge is enacted. In this sense, aesthetics merges the material object of the author’s interpretation of events together with the various interpretations that may be elicited among readers. Materiality and non-materiality again unite. The social construction of knowledge continues “not as something concealed to be brought to light and explained” (Strati, 1999, p. 17) but as an ongoing project in the community of readers. A reading experience fully immersed in chapters four through nine should already have begun this interactive experience.

The second form of knowledge production is found in the present chapter ten. While the art of chapters four through nine expresses meaning (Caldecott, 2009; Eisner, 2002), the analysis of chapter ten states meaning (Eisner, 2002). In chapter ten, chapters four through nine are analyzed as a cultural artifact and symbol. To this extent, and in keeping with the narrative construction of the chapters, analysis proceeds in a more literary manner by seeking dominant themes. The identification of these elements of story are for the autoethnographic advantage of peering into the experience of the writer’s attempt to balance the objective and subjective worlds as an educational leader, observe the conditions of the culture and participate in the potential creation of new culture as the reader imagines his or her own applications (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Thematic analysis will be done chapter by chapter first, as each chapter does have dominant themes indicated by the titles, followed afterward by an analysis of overarching themes pervading the entire account.

Once the thematics of the experience have been identified, the research question will be addressed. The research question is: What are the challenges and benefits of undertaking the task of educational leader as both science and art while keeping steady reference to the aporia of objectively understood reality and subjective experiences of that same reality? To answer this

question I will begin by looking first at how the author was able to “undertake the task of educational leader as both science and art.” To answer this question, I will revert back to the dominant themes and events in the artifact as sources. Following this, I will then analyze challenges and benefits of balancing the two worlds. I will conclude the analysis by assessing the benefits and limitations of autoethnography as a form of knowledge production.

The entire chapter will speak of myself as the *author*, *writer* or *the principal* in order to bring a greater sense of objectivity in this section and maintain as detached a posture as possible, though it is granted that complete detachment is not possible, nor perhaps desirable. The author is able to bring his experience to bear and sometimes expand on what may not be directly apparent in the story. The perceptive reader may pick up on this occasionally.

Dominant themes

In keeping with the storied or narrative nature of the chapters, analysis in this section proceeds in a more literary manner by seeking dominant themes.

Chapter by chapter thematic analysis.

Chapter 4 – Dark way forward.

Chapter four introduces us to the writer. We are given a poetic synopsis of his early life where he moved annually from one school to another but very soon we find him in his adult career located in South Korea where he works as a Vice Principal, soon to be Principal. He has a family (a wife and son) but they have never lived together for any lasting duration, though that is anticipated to change.

The cornerstone of this chapter is a mythological journey the author makes at a certain point in his life where he finds himself challenged to confront his own inner fears represented symbolically in dreams, but also in reality as a bear. It is a spiritually meaningful event for the

author and helps to establish a paradoxically dual sense of self and otherness whereby the author feels he is being both mentored by and gradually transformed into the bear spirit that he is. It is a journey in which the author needs to confront his fear of the unknown, the wild, the dark and hidden places. Not only confront, but somehow absorb, take in, acknowledge those dark places within himself. There is a sense of becoming connected and drawn toward that which is most primal, to red clay, dream life and dark paths.

The second main theme is the contrast between the instability of conditions in the writer's exterior world with the relative sanctum of calm the author experiences internally. The writer experiences this external instability long after his mythological bear encounter. The author identifies himself as a contemplative leader, one who is comfortable in circumstances of chaos. Numerous threats to his material existence are detailed including threats to income, residency, career, family etc. which he answers with a sense of calm curiosity and intense desire to produce something worthwhile. The author indicates that early in his life he made up his mind that he would never conform to any pressure for survival and that leisure, not work, was going to be his fundamental approach to living. Even so, the writer was not so unaffected by his external pressures, and when pushed to extremes, the bear spirit provided strength where natural strength waned.

The chapter ends with the writer's first act as principal which is to oversee a change in ownership of the school. As the deal is sealed, we observe the owner sweating profusely and it leads us to wonder what is coming for the principal, the owner and the school.

Chapter 5 – No illusions.

The main theme of this chapter is the issue of concealment and subterfuge amidst the various agendas of the characters in the story. On one hand the issue is viewed as a simple matter

honesty and dishonesty, basic ethics. On the other hand, social systems are recognized as being complicated and there are times when lies are viewed as appropriate. Further, the school itself is seen analogously as indistinct from the natural world in which predation, parasitism and the general brutality of natural processes appear integral. Yet, it is to this world of nature that the principal believes we bring human value.

Concealment and subterfuge takes place between four characters: JJ, Kyle, Darlene and the principal. Darlene, the former principal, had always wished to have full charge of the school but was hindered frequently by Kyle in the previous year and appeared incapable of discerning concealed motives behind the actions of the other players. While she comforted herself with the illusion of finally defeating Kyle by keeping a record of all the wrongs he committed and then reporting him to the ministry, Kyle meanwhile got promoted to a position above hers. JJ makes his plans to remove Kyle, but follows legal protocol and has to bide his time. However, he has caved in to Kyle's threats several times before and even recently promoted Kyle, is it possible he will cave in again? What is it that allows him to rehire and promote a man who has resigned so many times? Kyle, is a talker. He is smooth and his deceits drip honey. He manipulates situations to his own advantage and while outwardly resigning, he appears to believe he is leaving the stage only temporarily. He sees himself as one who has things well managed while playing the role of fallen hero. The principal certainly does not desire that Kyle's resignation be overturned and is content to help the other players amplify their own motives. He allows Kyle to feel more in control as he submits humbly to all of Kyle's directions. The principal also helps JJ amplify his anger, so that JJ follows through in removing Kyle from the school once and for all.

There is, in this chapter, the suggestion that the leader looks upon raw existence with lucidity, a turning away from illusions. Yet nearly the entire chapter revolves around various

characters playing or being made victim to illusions. And while this story presents a willingness to gaze upon what is really there, even so as this chapter demonstrates, it is all conceptualized in the heroic mode. The principal, the author, visualizes himself as the hero of a story confronting the forces of nature. He looks at the abyss, he stares at the death of the school, his job and possibly his career but he still does so in an imaginative way. It is a kind of fantasy, but is it rose coloured? Is there a hint of naïveté even in this turbulence?

Chapter 6: Adjusting to conditions.

As the chapter title indicates, the theme of chapter six is that of acceptance or rejection of the conditions in which we find ourselves. Five dominant episodes in the story point to acceptance or rejection of conditions, these include Celina; who, though loud and obnoxious, found a way to accept her rather challenging conditions with humility; the seventh grade parents who could not accept having Celina in their midst and attempted a power play to resolve matters; Harold's parents who seemed to accept conditions around the enrolment of their son, but in the end expressed a great deal of rage and sought revenge rather than resolution; and the author's mother who though polite, really could not accept matters she encountered and responded with wounded self pity. Most of all, this chapter is a story of the principal facing and responding to the conditions of the school. His response is basically physical exhaustion while remaining generally positive though the mornings appear dark.

In every case, whether conditions are accepted or not accepted, some form of suffering takes place and this suffering is a further condition that either gets accepted or not. Each person in the story demonstrates more or less capability of enduring the suffering that is required to span an expectation gap between the actual conditions and those that are desired. Everyone seeks

comfort somehow whether it be having someone to talk to, engaging in blame, or self pity and for the author at least, comfort can apparently come in dreams as well.

Chapter 7 – Between Conceptions.

This chapter presents a condition of being in pivot. It is a state of being between two conceptions as highlighted by the principal's winter solstice meditation. One may interpret from his presentation that the principal sees the school moving from a time of darkness to light, and this transition is a part of the normal rhythm of nature, echoing Dewey's words about organism and environment in chapter six. It requires a change of conception, one that is both brutally aware of the facts of existence while yet crafting hope in the darkest of hours. For the author, it requires being aware of both conceptions simultaneously.

Throughout this chapter there are a number of episodes where conceptions are challenged. It begins with the principal transitioning to a place where he has more time available and this change of space in his schedule also allows a change of space in his thinking. He begins to reflect about his willingness to risk. Risk in this sense is portrayed as a willingness to walk between perceptions: between being thought of as the betrayer in his former workplace or as a model of human justice for offshore teachers; from being considered a slow student or something at least resembling a determined student; from the conception of being a lawbreaker or one who is willing to find the flexibility within a system. Even the choice to be a leader at all, has been a balance between self indulgence and self offering.

Others in this chapter encountered the opportunity to change conceptions. Sometimes differences in perception were brought to agreement when the facts of the matter were well understood, as it was in the case of Lawrence. Other times, different perceptions merely encountered one another as they did between the principal's approach of vulnerability and Ms.

Edgar's more guarded approach. The teacher, Ms. O had to transition from conceiving of her relationship to Lawrence in a very positive light, to one that was more guarded. The principal had to change Lawrence's requirement to go home from the idea that punishment was being delivered, to the idea that Lawrence was being protected. There was a perception change required on the part of the principal when he learned to translate what he initially viewed as a nearly criminal activity of a parent uttering threats to that of a parent considering himself part of the community that raises the child. The chapter concluded with the school community once again being challenged to change their conception of certain student's disabilities to a tolerance or celebration of difference. This chapter, while it records the principal's distaste for the term *disabled student*, does not make any visible progress in bringing about a different conception. If anything, it appears that ground was lost.

Yet, as the principal reflected on this period in school history, the principal was reminded through the words of Dorothy Sayers (1987), that an artist never masters the material, but cooperates with it and the goodness that is sought according to Peterson (1988), is to be found within the very conditions we are confronted by.

Chapter 8 – Breakthroughs.

Chapter eight provides a sense of resolution to some of the various tensions that have been pushing and pulling within the school. The chapter begins with the author's experience of feeling cast as an outsider. It is paradoxical because the author is a Canadian who takes pride in believing himself to be a part of every culture, yet rejected by those same cultures. In a sense, the school too, is an outsider institution and is rejected by a number of parents once they understand its purpose. The school is beginning to find its voice and in so doing, the principal is better able to quickly bring disputes to resolution. It is a breakthrough.

Other breakthroughs take place at the same time. The principal and the owner seem to make a breakthrough in trust as the principal considers that the owner is giving him a free hand in the face of uncertainty. The staff at the school begin working out how they will interpret and act on particular norms, such as keeping confidence or responding to parent complaints. The school population has taken a sudden advance upward and there is an acknowledgment or perhaps begrudging acceptance of the presence of special needs students in the school population. In addition, students are making breakthroughs as well, some related to academics, some to social life and others to emotional development. Lawrence for example identifies his own feeling of shame as the problem beneath the problem with his teacher. Breakthroughs in this sense can be thought of as moments of beauty, and recalls the words of John Dewey quoted at the beginning of chapter six that aesthetic pleasure comes when “the past ceases to trouble and anticipations of the future are not perturbing [then] is a being wholly united with his environment and therefore fully alive” (Dewey, 1934, p. 17). The past may not yet be completely removed from consideration, anticipation of the future may yet have perturbations, but there is a greater feeling of being united with the environment and one senses more vibrancy of life beginning to emerge in this account.

Chapter 9 – Choosing our trance.

As chapter four begins the narrative reflectively, so chapter nine ends the narrative reflectively. Chapter nine is perhaps the most dense.

On one level, the writer continues to ponder the dilemma between the external and internal worlds, choosing between outcomes and values, servitude and freedom, accumulation of things rather than enjoyment of them, learning as quantity or pleasure, challenge or nurture, stoicism or hedonism.

On another level, as a principal with international teaching experiences these questions begin to focus on learning systems as they are embedded in various cultures. He looks back on his experiences and compares American, Canadian and Korean systems. In his experience he believes that in place of moral choice the American system focuses on attainment and accountability. Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman (2004) claim the bottom line of such systems, (using the authors words, the illusion of empiricism), whereby reality is determined through “mathematical representation in statistics” (Pinar et al., 2004, p. 405). In the Canadian, or British Columbia system moral choice is replaced by conformity to law and the institutionalization of social norms. Pinar et al., (2004) would call this a rationalistic system. The writer presents these as sterile environments lacking in authenticity, calling for a more phenomenological understanding. Finally, the writer views the Korean school systems as a form of academic cotton mill. In contrast to American ambitions for attainment, the writer felt it his duty to try to humanize the environments. In contrast to Canadian sterility, the author felt it his duty to try to renaturalize the environment. In contrast to the Korean expectation of academic intensity the author indicates that Canadians (which he is) are typically less serious. More free, in fact.

Layered over these reflections, the author considers his own homeland in the light of his travels living and working in other countries. He recognizes that Canadians are idealistic (negatively described as naïve) compared to members of other countries. Canada has a happiness and light approach to life in a world seen as disorderly and disturbed. There is a sense of being sheltered from reality and a bit fake but never the less able to embrace members of other cultures. What troubles the author, it appears, is that his experiences in other countries have caused him to both retain, as well as turn against, the idealism he inherited from his mother’s

land. He challenges the happiness and light mentality preferring rather to challenge limitations and face dark paths, willing to be marked by life. This willingness to be marked, to take nature within himself is something that contrasts distinctly with what he understands of the professional and social tone of Canadians. He wants to return to Canada, but he often deliberates against the limitations he would face. The author claims to seek or find contentment in any condition, yet he somehow cannot be content with his own country.

The author expresses a desire to live on the edge, to make his mark within the bark of border-wood. But he needs to find a way to conform as well. To be completely independent would mean having no part in the world (Linstead, 2000). He wants to launch out on his own and abandon the norm, but gets upset when there are legal or professional sanctions. He wants both acceptance and difference. Perhaps, the inner habit that is preventing him from contributing to his destiny as Buber describes is refusing the marks of being Canadian which entail this very struggle with difference and commonality in a multicultural society. Instead of turning against Canadian discontent and naivety/idealism, perhaps he needs to embrace it as an aspect of his own irresolvable character.

According to the author a trance is a kind of artifice. It is the story we tell ourselves about reality. The better it helps us adapt and contribute to our destiny the better the trance. It is difficult to identify one's own trances but if one is able, one may then move to make changes. A trance can protect us, but it can also be a cage. The author's denial and subsequent recognition of his own characteristics as a Canadian, may be the border wood where contact between reality and the writer's interpretation of it is discovered. Is it possible the bear has finally scratched his rough hewn mark? And, did the subconscious already anticipate the author's eventual return to himself and his culture granting the Christmas card offering of forgiveness?

General themes permeating the entire narrative.

Cosmetic education and conformity to norms.

Chapter nine brings together an insight for the principal that one of his goals in life was to remove the artifice brought about by skin creams or make up. It is an interesting contradiction considering that it is the goal of the principal to balance art with science. Is it possible that the writer only wishes to produce certain kinds of art? In the context of this discussion the principal states a preference for individuality, rather than becoming just like everyone else. It seems highly probable that the writer is not against make up per se, only the idea of neutralizing distinctiveness. It is a kind of rough and ready romantic rather than classic view. The damage we experience is, like the mistakes at a Christmas play, all part of the poetry of life. Good and bad mixed together constitutes, for the writer, a quality experience in education. Bear in the woods, not skin cream in a hotel room.

This conflict of aesthetics leads to a consideration of norms. The author finds comfort in Thai norms that do not require the husband to be at home with his family in chapter four, he uses BC norms as a means to defend the presence of a student with Epilepsy in chapter six and he makes extensive use of grading norms when defending Ms. O against the accusations of unfairness by a student. The principal also made reference to Korean norms when determining how to respond to the discipline of a child by someone else's parent. Yet, it was also the classification of learning needs as abnormal to Koreans which presented such difficulty for him in chapter seven. The principal focused on norms as a means of demonstrating how a child learns about society through social experiences in BC schools rather than the concept of the child conforming to an ideal model of appropriateness. However, as we see, norms can also be converted into a kind of ideal as well, and this is made particularly central when discussing

professional standards in chapters eight and nine where it becomes apparent that while students are taught to challenge convention, the teaching standards create a strong pressure for teachers to conform. Thus teachers expect students to do what they dare not do themselves. It makes the term norm somewhat ironic as it gradually transitions from what people normally do, to lawful expectation in the most extreme case and it is rather enlightening to consider that work in Kuwait felt rather much freer for the author than it ever did in Canada.

Care or Careless?

The author claims that early in his life he made the determination that he would only ever do anything out of a motive of care. Yet, certainly there will be some who question if he is actually caring or not. According to Nell Noddings (2005) real care must feel like care to the people being cared for. Perhaps the writer believes this as well but it does not look that way at times. He told Darlene the former principal that he was prepared to see the death of the school if necessary. Was this care or just recklessness? He made quite a spectacle out of shouting at a student in Kuwait, was that care or a secret desire to hurt? The author lets us believe that he is just acknowledging the real world in such situations. In the case of the school, he said he was merely allowing the actual disease within the school to become apparent as Kyle continued to make unhelpful decisions. In the case of the student in Kuwait, the principal was being a force of nature that the student needed to contend with – a little hard reality to loosen the student from an unhelpful trance. What about the removal of Harold from the school? Was that a caring act? Of course, it appeared that a trap had been set for the principal, but even so he did let slip that they had to look out for the interests of the school. This could be, and was, interpreted as callousness.

In contrast to Noddings' (2005) concept of care being something that is felt as care, the principal articulates care as something you give for the sheer delight in generous giving.

Whatever is meant by this it is clear that giving is conceived of as a deficit in the givers' column. The intentions are good. Perhaps it is possible that some of the people to whom the principal directed his hard care may not have felt it to be care at the time, but in both of these recorded cases the author indicates the positive outcomes. Eventually the child in Kuwait came to enjoy coming to his teacher's class and the parents were appreciative. This is a fortunate occasion where the lasting impact of hard care showed positive fruit. Similarly, we have the brief poetic comment in chapter four about the author finally able to learn math from the teacher who threw the wood block. The author disagrees with Noddings to this extent: if the care is given with some expectation of return (even appreciation) it would not qualify as care but would instead be more associated with a kind of investment or exchange, like a salary. Further, if the care is to be felt as genuine can it be accomplished in a purely clinical manner? The author does not believe so but thinks that a caring exchange requires the possibility of negative as well as positive passion. Such a view calls into question the current highest professional standard of care in the BC model (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2012).

Institution as wilderness.

The writer considers institutions to be wilderness settings rather than machines or clinics. In chapter five he makes the direct link between the frightening aspects of nature and its apparent disinterestedness toward life and links the dangers of the natural world to modern institutions and even humanity itself. In chapter six, he cites Dewey's contention that aesthetics are ultimately about the feeling of pleasure that takes place when the dynamism between the organism and its environment (a nature based metaphor) reaches a point of harmony. Further, also in chapter six, Celina is portrayed as a volcano, packed with destructive capacity. In chapter nine, the author presents American or competitive schooling as wildernesses that are inhospitable to life in a

bestly sense and Canadian schools as inhospitable to life in a clinical antiseptic sense. In either case, it is clear that as he operates the school the principal conceives of his workplace as inseparable from nature, and finds his own sense of strength and power by his identification with the bear in the forest. He often imagines people he encounters in animal ways. JJ his employer is a kind of quiet beast, perhaps a bull, while his son Ronan is likened to an antelope. There is a confrontation between the writer and JJ which parallels the principal's earlier confrontation with a bear in the British Columbia wilds. Madalena is characterized as a kind of fussy cat in chapter five. Ms. Edgar is characterized as a cross eyed bird of prey in chapter seven, the raging parent of chapter 8 as a rabid dog, and his former principal when making demands on him, likewise as a dog barking for meat. When talking to staff he tells them that they need to understand the conditions they sail in, meaning that the mood and temper of the parents and culture can be read as a mariner reads weather.

John Taylor, states "we are not moved by thought alone but by the integration of an idea and desire... and gadgets, computers and gimmicks used to hold attention, all taking place in classroom environments technologically insulated from reality, are simply parts of the generally unlovable atmosphere of modern education, unlovable because they are all efficiency, utility and no longer beautiful" (Taylor, 1998, p. 171). Taylor, finds easy friendship with Davies (1985) who writes in his novel that science is the theology of our time, but "has such a miserable vocabulary and such a pallid pack of images to offer us" (Davies, 1985, p. 72). The wilderness metaphor operates for the writer in the manner that Taylor or Davies might readily approve of. School as wilderness is a trance that helps the writer accomplish his work as principal and even establish a tone of respect and humanity in the work place despite how derogatory it sometimes sounds. His trance stands in contrast to Darlene's, in chapter five, whose assumptions had been

formed in sterile Canadian schooling environments. She had trouble sniffing out the truth amidst the subterfuge and openly admits to naïvely believing people at face value.

Judgement in the absence of rules.

Frequently we find the writer as principal making judgements or moving into uncertainty where there is no rule to guide behavior or even a place where he challenges the rule itself. Referencing Elliot Eisner (2002), in chapter nine, he describes this action as judgement in the absence of a rule, which he calls art. Several incidents may be cited in which these sort of judgements were required. Suing his former employer in chapter four was a judgement call with no guaranteed outcome. Honoring JJ as his employer where there were reasons to question him in chapter seven. Accepting Celina while rejecting Harold as students in the school. Opposing the ten parents who wanted Celina removed. When the principal described his choice of vigorously confronting his Kuwaiti student to the teachers, one of them stated that it required balance. Yet, while there is no rule, there are guidelines. In the context of contemplative leadership, one assesses one's own inner climate in an act of discernment, as either consolation or desolation in chapter four. Even so, the writer further states in chapter seven that the hardest thing to determine is if his actions are good or not. The actions of judgement in the absence of a rule occur at boundaries where if the outcome turns out one way, it will indicate something such as losing the legal battle would indicate what a unreliable offshore teacher he was, or winning the legal battle would show what a hero he was. Both of which are components of various trances, but can and do have material outcomes.

Authenticity.

The principal presents himself in chapter four as a genuine seeker of truth heroically struggling to push the world to some better status. However in chapter five, he appears to be very

consciously playing different characters against each other. There is, once again, the episode of performing anger both for the student refusing to disembark the bus, and the office staff appearing in cahoots with JJ in scaring Tan Jeon into better behavior. There is the issue, again, of teacher professional standards, and letting one's sensual art work be known, or publicly wearing sweatpants or being seen in a state of inebriation. Truth is apparently not equally valued at all times and becomes a manipulable concept. Once this is acknowledged it becomes a lot trickier determining good lies and bad lies. It requires ethical judgement which may turn out to be an art as well. In chapter nine, there is mention of teachers avoiding anything that appears inappropriate. However, as soon as one moves in the direction of concern for appearances, one becomes more aligned with advertising agencies and politicians vulnerable to the accusation of insincerity. One must be sensitive to the trances of the people around you and clear about whether or not one wishes to contradict such trances or not. And, who decides which trance is better?

The subconscious.

Throughout this story the subconscious is ever present. At first it is dramatically so with the story of the bear in chapter four. However it continues to pop up with dreams and little reveries that appear from time to time. There was the dream of the teacher with the map in chapter four, challenging the author to point to the time of his birth. He had another dream in chapter six of the god offering a new perspective and the indication of his trustworthiness. There was the winter meditation on solstice, its meaning and the poetry of the season in chapter seven. There was the devil in chapter eight, distorting communication. There was the forgiveness episode of the Christmas card. But, all of this is underlined by the emphasis on trance. Our very lives seem to depend to a large extent on how we have been civilized or tranced to understand

our world and environment. In that sense, our entire existence for the most part is guided by the symbols provided to us by our culture (whether scientific, religious, literary etc.) and these symbols help us to understand and respond to the real there that Science tells us is really there.

From the very beginning, the author presents his case as responding to a mythical challenge to engage in the “battle between good and evil” that he might find a way to “express the inexpressible.” Following Robertson Davies’ (1972) suggestion to be a hero and work out his own self knowledge in the manner of Freud, Adler and Jung, the writer of this text has taken his memories and strung them together into a story that can, itself, be likened to a dream. In it, his subconscious may sneak something in, and the present chapter functions in this sense as dream analysis allowing the writer to seek windows into his own subconscious so as to achieve individuation and become a more complete person and leader.

Insider/outsider.

Related to the issue of trance is a kind of insider/outsider energy that seems continuously active. To Kyle, Madalena and father of Harold, the principal played an outsider role in their trance. He was in turns, an underling, a bother, and an object of contempt. To the principal Kyle was needy. His need for adulation brought him down. Madelena was a malcontent, and her belligerence brought her down. The father of Harold was to be pitied as he could not find a suitable trance to help him deal with the challenges his son was posing for him and he left no room in his anger for anyone to break through and provide assistance. The entire story could perhaps be reinvestigated simply by tracing how each person played a role in every other person’s trance. It would be an interesting investigation and demonstrates the complicated nature of social relations. But there is more. Giorno, for example, a friend of the former principal Darlene seemed tempted to use his insider knowledge to elevate himself early in the school year

by challenging the principal's leadership but did not know he was already lacking in sufficient resources to adequately interpret circumstances. Office staff showed from time to time that they had a better idea about what was going on in the school than the principal did, and clearly the owner consulted them privately.

Play and leisure.

In chapter four the author makes the plain statement that all his work is done out of an attitude of leisurely generosity. Early in his life, after an episode with his step father, he vowed never to do anything out of external compulsion or fear of deprivation but rather view his work and life as a gift of love to a world that will sustain him, the work of a master not a slave. He feels that actively avoiding external compulsion or fear protects his anima and prevents him from being reduced to the state of furniture in life. Is it any surprise then that the writer faces external instability and unpredictability in both chapter four and five with a kind of calm that is not disconnected to reality, but immensely curious as to what outcomes play out? The leadership layer of his attitude to work is articulated by Eggert's (1998) chapter four descriptions of the contemplative leader being at peace or repose, and this sense of repose is what provides the leader with discernment to make decisions in the midst of turbulence. It is further described by Eggert (1998) in chapter six as a stance of love, and in chapter seven the author describes it specifically as an attitude of being a blessing.

However, just saying it doesn't make it so. The author is deeply challenged as his Visa paperwork runs into snags and he faces multiple threats of job loss, loss of reputation, loss of residence and loss of family. During this time of difficulty, he finds himself able to draw courage from the symbolic representation of the pivotal event in his past where he faced the bear and lived to tell about it. The author identifies with the woodcarver in Palmer (1990) who claims his

good work comes about precisely because he resists external threats and rewards focussing rather on his own inner truth. Eggert's (1998) conception of the contemplative leader also supports this view when she provides the example of Anthony de Mello, a Jesuit priest who describes his destiny as something separate from his health, ideologies, good name, reputation, and even his life.

The interesting tension that becomes resolved in chapter four is when the author's inner world compelled him to confront the external world. In this event, both the inner world and outer world appeared as threats symbolized by the bear in dreams and represented by a real bear on the Kettle Valley cycling trail. It is as if, the writer matured in his ability to face both his inner and outer threats in a spiritual test, preparing him to face the professional world of threats to come. Prior to this event, no matter what the writer said to himself about being unaffected by external compulsion, he would always have the nagging feeling that he was unable even to walk up a dark road. Later when describing how the contemplative leader confronts less than ideal conditions, Eggert (1998) refers to it as a stance of love, thought of metaphorically as kissing a leper. Not only so, but such unideal conditions, might, as suggested by Lewis (1955), be enjoyed if approached with the appropriate understanding. There may even be found, mysteriously, according to Strati (1999), a tragic pleasure in suffering.

The research question

I now turn to the research question which is: What are the challenges and benefits of undertaking the task of educational leader as both science and art while keeping steady reference to the aporia of objectively understood reality and subjective experiences of that same reality? To answer this question, I turn to the theorists I began with. One by one, each theorist or theory group will be used as a lens to examine the evidence for examples of how science and art might

be understood, how they are balanced by the principal and what are the challenges and benefits in each case. I will begin in order of the theorists as they appear in the Conceptual Framework.

The context of life itself.

Jürgen Habermas.

Habermas' (1984, 1987) basic framework is system (science) and lifeworld (art) where lifeworld is primary and system is derivative. Lifeworld is a pre-interpreted and unquestioned set of assumptions about how to understand the social world while from the perspective of the system elements of the lifeworld are viewed as functional elements of a system and these elements are driven by various media such as money and power. While the lifeworld needs the system to function, the system has a tendency to grow without restraint and eventually comes to possess the lifeworld resulting in various social pathologies.

One example germane to Habermas' theorization is the example of the principal terminating his employment with one school and accepting employment in another. The termination of employment was defined by his former employer as a broken contract and had penalties attached to it. The leader was willing to submit to the conditions established within the school system, until the system appeared to be calculated as punishment. This went against the author's lifeworld expectations of fair play. The author then challenged the system by appealing to the courts. In doing so, it was discovered that in fact, the employer was not abiding by the requirements of the legal system established in the country of Kuwait. The school system which was set against its employee for being out of compliance, was itself out of compliance with Kuwait's system. In this case it was a struggle between two systems and this struggle had an impact on the writer's security. In this case, the science or objective world is represented in two cases, the first being school policy which represents the external conditions to which the writer

as employee needed to adapt, but in the second case Kuwait law which represented the external conditions to which the school needed to adapt. The writer balanced both worlds (system and lifeworld) by first submitting himself (adapting his lifeworld set of assumptions) to the externally imposed requirements of the system until it offended an internal sense of fairness (crossed a lifeworld rubicon). Out of that internal sense of unfairness he then pushed back – seeking balance. For the duration of the struggle he appeared to experience some of the pathologies listed in Finlayson (2005) including 1. decrease in shared understanding: though he tried to settle matters with his employer, no agreement was achieved, 2. Social bonds were eroded as the writer’s employer made disparaging remarks to him, rather than come to agreement, and 3. The risk of alienation occurred as the writer worried that he was confronting an international school social taboo.

The principal attempted to balance the systemic expectations of the school with his own lifeworld expectations by bringing changes to the system rather than his lifeworld. The cost for the principal to conform to the system was too high. The principal appealed to a higher system, and this appeal to a higher system was a lifeworld decision of attempting to find agreement with his employer. The writer could not avoid negative consequences which was the loss of financial security he experienced in the immediate future. A further disadvantage of challenging the system is that the writer risked losing more than he already agreed to give up. The benefit of trying to balance his lifeworld expectations with the system of the school is that there was potential to conserve some of his losses. He never anticipated doing better than that, but as it turned out not only did he win the case, but he was awarded more payout than he claimed in his original complaint. Further, as a result of his case against the school, he set precedent for other international school teachers in Kuwait and this defines him as a leader in these circumstances.

Habermas' theory functions well to analyze this case as it assumes a society of equals and Kuwait law in this case appeared to support the claims of the weaker teacher foreigner in his struggle with the more powerful owners of the elitist school. The unforced force of the best argument won, and this was backed up with the usual threats of institutional force if necessary. At least, that is the perspective of the winning side.

Agnes Heller.

Heller's (1999) version of science and art is described as the technological and historical imaginaries, where technological is conceived as problem solving, planning and calculation while historical is conceived as interpretation, recollection and reflection where each imaginary plays against the other in a continuous dynamic creating the forward movement of modernity. An appropriate example here may be seen in the author's attempt to plan for a school year using the predefined technology of the BC Ministry's model of schooling against and along with the historical actions and interpretations of the CEO Kyle and the school ownership. In order for the principal to move forward, he needed to honor both principles, that of accountability to the BC system and accountability to the historical context of the school which was in turmoil. In order to live between two systems the principal had to interpret, recollect and reflect on his situation accurately before he could even begin to merely attend to the problems, planning and calculation involved in running a school organization according to assigned protocols. The challenges this posed to him was to accurately read the dynamics occurring in the historical imagination of the major players. It was fortunate perhaps that the principal had spent a year gathering information from the previous principal to prepare him for the decisions he had to enact in the first month of his new job as principal. The benefit of being able to balance both worlds of technological and historical imaginary was that the principal survived a battle and largely protected staff from any

negative outflow as evidenced by their willingness to return the following year however there were health and perhaps mental pressures that the teacher/leader endured.

Varela, Thompson and Rosch.

Varela et al (1991) formulate a theory of enaction which is the process by which one balances cognition as behavior (computational mind) with cognition as experience (phenomenological mind). This theory points out the evidence of a world of particles and energy in a cause and effect universe as it contradicts the richness of life as we experience it in our consciousness. Perhaps this is illustrated most vividly in the bear story recounted by the writer. In this case we have the writer motivated by the mythical inner experience described something like a voice as well as several dream experiences which are then confirmed in the future with actual teeth and claws made of real world matter in motion. This experience on the bicycle trail seems to arise because of the inner voice and dreams of the cyclist, yet it can just as readily be interpreted in a rational cause and effect manner of what happens when a group of people go on a cycling trail deep in the forest. This is a prima facie case of material and subjective unity. Poetry enacted. The writer balanced two worlds, in this particular case, the challenge of facing the abyss of death in the physical sense of being mauled by a bear, and death in the experiential sense that the author seemed to be facing down something primal – his own inarticulate fear reflex. Yet, paradoxically it was, in a sense, fear or shame of being afraid that drove him forward to face his fear in both worlds of matter and spirit. The benefit of being willing to encounter the physical and immaterial world in this way was to bring about a certain resolution of spirit in the face of characteristic circumstances. A template was formed in this situation that allowed him to face future analogous situations. The precedent setting encounter with the bear established a pattern for behavior, rather than rule generated response. As Bourdieu says “*the opposition between the*

universal and the unique, between nomothetic analysis and idiographic description, is a false antinomy. The relational and analogical mode of reasoning fostered by the concept of field enables us to grasp particularity within generality and generality within particularity” (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 75). The challenges of living in this balanced way is that it is not entirely in control of the participant. There are no guarantees that following one’s voice, spirit, dreams will bring about certain outcomes, yet the invitations are there.

Carl Jung.

With Carl Jung (Stevens, 1994), the bear story might likewise be employed as the integration of two selves where we have the unification of the biological facts of existence with the spiritual facts of existence united in the integrated psychology of the complete person. Archetypes, according to Jung, are both neurological as well as psychic structures that unite the subjective experiences of our inner world with the external world. The goal of the human organism is to bring together the internal world and external world in a process leading to homeostasis. Those who achieve this state are said to achieve individuation. When there are difficulties achieving this individuation, assistance comes from therapy and the dream life. For instances of therapeutic dreams, we already have the example of the bear dreams. Beyond this, there is the ongoing mythical quality of exchange that takes place between the author and his own bear shrine when he is challenged to push himself to the edge of his endurance in the face of material obstacles experienced upon his arrival in Korea. Further assistance is provided for the principal along the way with various other dreams, the dream of the male god identified as a brother telling the author to wear the eye piercing spectacles, and the dream of the Christmas card seeming to represent some resolution of soul taking place in the principal. The author balances these worlds by simply being open, aware and responsive to the urgings of the

symbolic, and the mythic in whatever form they appear whether in the shape of the personal shrine, or dreams or an early morning poetic reflection on Cherry trees in the winter. Challenges for the author in following this way are the potential to confusion. How many dreams did the author have that are not recorded in the story? Were there dreams that mislead the writer? None apparently, but surely it is possible. How does one determine useful from distracting reveries? Finally, are all dreams, images or archetypes friendly? There is a hint in the story that the bear is not the most comforting companion or likable spirit to follow. There is as much potential for guidance, as there is for destruction.

Educational Theorists.

We now move from the general theorists to those more specifically representative of the field of education.

Comparative International Education.

Comparative International Education is recognized as the most comprehensive theory based investigation into the world of education one might access and the field openly acknowledges the dilemma of science (objectivity) and art (subjectivity). They typically describe this polarity as the conflict between neo-institutional theory and critical theorists. Neo-institutionalists argue that since schools are structured according to material principles, there are basic structures that are undeniable: a school, is a school, is a school and any school in any culture would be readily identifiable. Critical theorists argue that humans seek freedom from oppression and no matter what form a school may take, the people intimately involved with this school will continually adapt, modify and resist elements of schooling that they do not find congenial. For neo-institutionalists, schools have a definitive nature, for critical theorists there is agency and unpredictability. In the account we find written here, there are definitive as well as

unpredictable elements. The clearest display of these distinctions are brought to awareness when cultural dissonance arises. There is the comment that Koreans and Canadians have nearly opposite aesthetics when it comes to teaching and learning. Koreans want learning to have a serious tone while Canadians want matters to be rather easy going and friendly. Koreans want their children to suffer for their studies and can be quite rigorous in their schooling expectations with little tolerance for students who degrade the learning atmosphere with misbehavior or even lack of sufficient capability, as it might slow their own children down. Canadians on the other hand have more emphasis on the need for children to suffer (be patient) in order to learn tolerance in social relations and to be proactive in voicing their needs to their friends and adults. Homework in Canada is not valued too highly. In these examples we see that both countries have homework, schoolwork and social relations (which acknowledges the basic structure argument posed by the neo-institutionalists) but how these are managed vary significantly. The task of balancing the unvarying with the varying elements turns out to be more about balancing cultural expectations. Because the program is a BC program, BC culture is imbedded in the curriculum, teaching and management practices. A change in management practices would conflict with what is being explicitly taught to the students and thus create an irresolvable dissonance. The principal chose rather to advance the concept that Canadian culture is imbedded in the curriculum and then try to explain the implications of this to the parents in the community. The benefits derived from this approach are that continuity of programming was maintained and Canadian teachers coming to the school did not find themselves confused about how to respond to situations. The down side is that some parents found the differences to be too upsetting and chose to show their anger through gossip and stirring up anger among other parents, or they simply left the school. Whatever the case, the dissonance created by the shock of difference was

often quite extreme. The comparative neo-institutional and critical theories highlight the difference of cultural response to those elements that seem universal. It was the principal's task to attempt to negotiate these varied responses in the most productive manner for the future of the school.

Inna Semetsky.

Inna Semetsky (2005) argues for expanded understanding of our world through a process of abduction hypothesis verification that results by following a movement through firstness, secondness and thirdness, each of which incorporates the former as the entire process emerges. Firstness is a kind of hypothesis or premises that is assumed without any reason for knowing how the understanding is attained. Secondness is denial or acceptance of the hypothesis through the basic facts of reality and thirdness is the resulting explanation. A perfect example of this is found in the principal's suspicion that the mother of Joo-Won is a kind of sleeper cell. The principal mentions it to the owner without any real justification, just an arising feeling as if it was already known. After the facts are investigated, it turns out that the mother has associations with Kyle and the conclusion is drawn that she is working in partnership with Kyle to create disturbance and dissatisfaction among other parents about the school. The discovery of the facts is secondness and the explanation of those facts is called thirdness. This combination of imagination and cumulative facts produces a new object of knowledge and action that did not exist in the organization before. This way of learning to interpret events fits the metaphor of learning to swim, in which one makes numerous trials and errors in one's mind. It also accords with Senge et al.'s (2005) concept of rapid prototyping in the face of rapidly changing circumstances. It is about "entering a flow of improvisation and dialogue in which the particulars inspire the evolution of the whole and vice versa" (Senge et al., 2005, p. 147) which "requires

the capacity to stay connected and grounded in your deepest source of inspiration and larger will while simultaneously learning to listen to all the feedback your actions elicit” (Senge et al., 2005, p. 148).

Benefits of balancing firstness with thirdness in this manner is the advantage of seeming to see around corners (Senge et al., 2005) and thus acquiring a certain amount of anticipation or ability to respond to rapid changes. Challenges with operating in this manner again might simply be the ability to remain open to suggestions within the environment as well as one’s own source of inspiration. From whence does personal inspiration come? Perhaps it is found, as Semetsky (2010) points out with her use of Tarot, in familiarity with archetypes, those strange attractors of the mind that invite us to make the necessary connections to meaningfully understand the events taking place in our environment. Both Laszlo (Semetsky, 2010) and Jung (Stevens, 1994) indicate that these archetypes exist in nature as much as they do our psyche so this might point out the need to remain connected with our external as well as internal senses (Woodward and Funk, 2010) in order to perceive, interpret and respond to the archetypes. Another challenge would be the willingness to be so affected by the environment that we ourselves become the rapidly changing prototypes (Senge et al., 2005, p. 147). It requires vulnerability.

Educational Leadership.

Fenwick English and Eugenie Samier.

Fenwick English (2008) and Eugenie Samier (2005) are paired together because they complement each other well. Fenwick English articulates the balance of science with art as a re-centering of humanity that counters the efficiency model through a process of mutual transformation where moral purpose rises up and takes a stand against the behavior and skills vision of leadership. Eugenie Samier argues that a re-emergence of the human needs to take

place in organizational studies and the touchstones might be identified in various humanities based studies such as historical studies, philosophy, anthropology, fine arts, architecture and theatrical analysis. In the account given in this dissertation we have a series of events pointing to a struggle the principal and Ms. Howard experience in being able to successfully create a space for the implementation of a special needs program through the use of Individualized Education Plans particularly for a student by the name of Celina who has social, emotional, intellectual and health challenges. She struggles to cope with all that she encounters but she is a willing and capable participant in her own transformation. What is clear however, is that the school community she is a part of does not tolerate the rough edges around her transformation. Despite the best efforts of the principal and Ms. Howard, Celina eventually gets pressured to leave the school. Never the less, this event crystallizes the nature of the challenge for the principal and he begins to consider and implement a campaign to counter what he calls the gangrene in the school body that required the amputation of this member.

The dilemma in this case is that the Korean parents and their children desire, to a certain extent, to be systematized. They wish for their children to be pressured and to conform. There is a desire for uniformity so that students might compare themselves against one another in a highly competitive model. The principal actively engages in presentations to parents showing how social expectations are different in British Columbia schools, that BC schools celebrate and even encourage diversity rather than view children as small adults that either conform, or not to the desired social ideal. He seems to make some headway after Celina left the school. Fate, as well, seems to accommodate these actions as a new student with special needs joins the school soon after the departure of Celina. This new student has parents with a high social profile and this puts added pressure on the school to be more accommodating.

The benefits of balancing the human with the formal structure of the school is acknowledging the obvious dual nature of education, in that it is both institutional and human at the same time. Educators teach future generations how to get along with one another and the hope is for a more tolerant and humane society. Challenges with reinserting the human into the system is that not only does the leader need to be vulnerable, but he is calling for the staff, parents and students to learn vulnerability as well. It provides opportunities for misunderstanding, especially when the environment has mixed behavioral expectations in the first place and reactions to perceived misbehaviors can result in such extreme actions as the uttering of murderous threats by parents to young children. Further, while BC Education's celebration of diversity is supported by a legal and cultural framework providing shelter for teachers and leaders to take risks with particular individuals, Korean schools and culture are not so supported. Legislation has taken place in Korea, (Marquez, 2015) but the culture has not caught up.

Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski, & Flowers.

Senge, et al. (2005) acknowledge two independent orders, the manifest domain and the universal domain. The manifest domain is that which makes itself known either tangibly or intangibly in the material world. The universal is that which is beyond form, thought or any thing. The leader is one who responds to both worlds and becomes a complete human. The greatest tool of the effective leader according to them, is self cultivation. In the account given in this dissertation, we have already mentioned the bear experience and how pivotal this was for the writer's personal growth and self understanding. Beyond these experiences, the entire autoethnographic dissertation itself can be thought of as practice in transformative awareness.

Since this is the case, further discussion of the challenges and benefits of this approach will be analyzed in the following section when we review the methodology.

Nancy Eggert.

Nancy Eggert (1998) advocates for a both/and approach to science and art through contemplative leadership where material principles of control, attachment, efficiency and rationality are countered with a more internal and spiritual approach of appreciation, detachment, creativity and compassion. Explicit references are made to Eggert throughout this narrative demonstrating the facility of her conceptions for describing the work the principal undertook. Her description of being “at peace or in repose” (Eggert, 1998, p. 186) was used to describe the principal’s orientation at the beginning of the story in chapter four in which the principal described the multitude of external events in upheaval. Eggert also helpfully describes a paradoxical combination of both detachment and vulnerability when she quotes the Jesuit priest differentiating between his life and destiny and all those other matters that are desirable and precious such as health, reputation, even life itself (Eggert, 1998). The author of this narrative appears to view directives in the curriculum, or pressures from his employer, bank balance, and dissertation time line as distractions from the main task of doing good work and associates himself with the detachment and vulnerability that Eggert (1998) describes.

Eggert (1998) also describes the contemplative leader in chapter five as being lucid, capable of looking at raw existence for what it is, which may be the reason she further claims in chapter six that the contemplative leader is willing to work in conditions that are less than ideal. It is worth taking a moment to consider this outlook. The statement that the contemplative leader is lucid is itself imbedded in the trance or set of religious beliefs called Christianity. In light of this, and what has already been said about the possibility that no one is able to gaze purely on the

chaos of existence (O'Reilly, 2000; Peterson, 1997b) we come upon a contradiction. We might agree with Eggert (1998) this far: the contemplative is capable of reserving judgement, of being open, even willing to entertain contradictions to his/her expectations induced as they are by personal trances. And, it may even be argued that, some have so trained their minds to be sensitive to the dangers of illusion that they are more capable than others of viewing life in its barest state. The very acceptance of the possibility that all is illusion is already progress in this direction. And, if one accepts the illusory nature of life, is it not possible that there are some who have trained themselves to unmask even their own illusions? Varela et al. (1991) and numerous autoethnographers (see Berry, 2013, p. 215) certainly believe this to be the case and propose particular practices enabling one to better gaze without illusion upon reality as a conscious being while science helps us from the point of view of material existence. Yet, what to make of the author's bear story? Surely there was something almost magical about this? Was the author staring at the abyss, suffering delusion or in contact with something real though inaccessible through our sense apparatus? Isn't it possible that some illusions based on imagination may be truer than the barest of assessments? We come again upon the unending circularity spoken of in Varela et al. (1991). Someone who is said to be a hero of utilitarianism, John Stuart Mill said that for lack of imaginative capacity he was suicidal and completely unmotivated despite being a genius in the rational tradition (Taylor, 1998). It was only as he learned the imaginative arts that he was capable of being successful (well adapted to reality). The ultimate realism, it seems to me, is to seek the barest, meanest, purist understanding of external reality and then match it with the richest, most abundant and satisfying illusion that best supplies the world's subjective needs. We can start at either end.

The science of comparative studies combined with the art of educational leadership.

The next set of theories to review are those from within comparative education. Because there could not be found any research from this vast field which advocated for or identified any combination of science and art I have elected simply to place them side by side. From the science perspective, educational leadership is described as operating in a context of greater and greater standardization and homogeneity much having to do with increased diffusion of technical educational standards within the nation state (Meyer and Ramirez, 2003). On the arts, or critical theory side of comparative international education, we have the counter argument that what is supposed as greater and greater conformity to a global model is simply a preference of the researchers acting out of their own myth or trance (Carney, Rappleye & Silova, 2012). The concept of a global standard for education is simply an imposition. Instead, critical theory works toward emancipation.

The story provided in this dissertation presents an interesting provocation. Many of the parents in this school seem to desire exactly what the neo-institutionalists desire. The parents expect that all schools will be the same, all students measured using the same competitive practices. Social impacts within the school should be minimal and learning impacts should be a hardship – imposed, one might say. In the principal's school however, it is the idea of tolerance and celebration of difference that is being imposed against the cultural norms of the host country. Some parents desire this and some are completely hostile. One could approach this by trying to develop a model that is mutually affirming, but the BC curriculum which the teachers are required to follow is infused with BC (Canadian) culture and the only way to proceed in this arrangement is for the parents and their children to learn the Canadian culture. In this case, the principal is unable to balance the science of objectivity as it is expressed in the parents' desire

for school as a realm of competition with the art of a school tolerating a diverse body of students with a range of capabilities as the trances are too hostile. Never the less, the objective realities of the world do intrude into the parents and owner's vision and the school finds itself having to accept difference whether they like it or not because one of the attractions to the BC school is that it is not Korean, that is, not standard. The principal did attempt to use the arts of persuasion and even the force of argument and defiance to bring about a more open attitude among parents but was only marginally successful at best.

Organizational Science and Arts perspective.

We come to the final two perspectives outlined in the conceptual framework. In contrast to comparative education, organizational theory does offer a balance between science and art that is only just gaining ground. On the science side, the tradition has it that there is a one best way in which to conduct organizational management (English, 2008) and that the doing (of workers) is separate from the thinking (of managers). Four major themes that prevail are that (1) management is value neutral, using analytical rationality (Eggert, 1998; Taylor, Ladkin & Statler, 2014) which results in (2) a primary focus on efficiency (English, 2008; Eggert, 1998) (3) through controlled planning (Eggert, 1998; English, 2008) further resulting in (4) the creation of context independent procedures for treating "standard syndromes" (Taylor, Ladkin & Statler, 2014). There is a tone of seriousness because managers are expected to control circumstances no matter how they turn out, as it is believed that context independent knowledge makes one capable of adjusting to any contingency. Anyone caught unawares, simply does not know or is not conforming to the well established procedures to be implemented in any context. On the organizational aesthetics side, you have the leader who attempts to live his own life as a work of art (Taylor, 2013) resulting, it is desired in all relationships and work settings likewise becoming

works of art. It begins with the leader's body as one interacts with elements in the work setting focussing more on senses than concepts (Springborg, 2010). Because conceptual understanding is set aside as secondary in this process the leader engages in periods of unknowing giving time and space for meaning to emerge. This is likened to Joseph Campbell's journey of the hero (Woodward & Funk, 2010; English, 2008). As one expresses one's self in the midst of this confusion and takes tentative action through "fast-cycle experiments or rapid prototyping" (Senge et al., 2005), meaning can, over time, be stabilized and judged for plausibility.

Yet, as stated earlier, leadership has also been conceived of as craft. In this case, as science it would be about "exemplary arrivals" (Barry & Meiseik, 2010, p. 335) – meaning, that the leader brings the school safely to clearly specified targets. At the same time as there are targets to be achieved, there are also "extraordinary departures" (Barry & Meiseik, 2010, p. 335) from the normal expectations. In this case, the usual emotional and cognitive states (perhaps one might say the normal trance) is abandoned in favour of exploration of unknown or uncharted territory in the void of chaos.

As to balancing art with science as craft, we clearly have both in the narrative. There is the heroic and inward journey of the principal clearly stated in the bear adventure, but also the entire context of the dissertation is conceived of as a heroic exploration. On the other hand, there is the submission to inspectors of all the documents and exposure of the operations of the school to external inspection and there is the client centered educational model. There was also the ongoing episode with Lawrence in which the principal at first enacted empathy, a process of interpersonal exploration that involved a display of sensitivity to the Lawrence's pained feeling, but also there was the firm reliance on facts in order to provide a basis for understanding and cause Lawrence to bring his subjective feelings into common alignment with the school.

Sometimes the external and internal worlds were balanced to create the art of destruction. The principal followed both the protocols of the organizational chart when completing Kyle's order of writing to the ministry, but he also used the art of subtlety and nuance to amplify Kyle's authoritarian aesthetic and JJ's anger. This act indicates the principal's Avant-guard intentions where his destructive capacity ensured the sort of changes that Darlene was unable to accomplish. Dewey (1934) in chapter six speaks of the movement from harmony to disharmony and back again as a kind of life process. Artificially prolonging such a state of harmony leads to decay. The principal accepts this concept as he instigated the disharmony needed to bring change to the school, even challenging JJ with the possibility that JJ might be incapable of doing what was necessary. And, the removal of Kyle did result in multiple experiences of disharmony, and caused the principal suffering to the point of illness. Yet, we may gather from the reflections on beauty in the breakthrough chapter that the principal and school returned to harmony once again.

There were failures as well. The two myths of Celina never did get resolved. The parents and students in Celina's class did not accept the difference that Celina represented and a class that had ten students at one point was reduced to about four with the threat that they would soon all depart if Celina remained. The principal practiced the science. He invoked analytical rationality through controlled planning and followed context independent procedures for treating epilepsy and set in place consequences for social misbehaviour and enacted an Individualized Education Plan for the Celina to help her with her social and emotional challenges. All these things were conducted using protocols that are quite normative and research and practitioner driven. However, none of this fit the idealized view of the Korean parents and their children. The principal was unable to find a means by which to bridge the gap in expectation and Celina left the school.

The main challenges of balancing these two approaches occur when one must choose to act on an externally justified basis or an internally one. When to be *responsible to a science of learning* or *responsive to personal or social myths*. Lawrence was removed from the classroom for causing the teacher and his classmates to be threatened. He caused a disruption, yet he was not punished as would be normal with other students such as Celina. Instead, he was removed from the class for his protection. In the case of Madalena, no normal procedures were followed. Had the principal followed the context independent procedures he may very well have kept a destructive employee on staff long enough for her to do real damage. On the other hand, Ms. O was not fired. She was disciplined and her contract was not renewed. This was more in keeping with standard protocols. And what to make of the author's indication that he resigned because of being called away from his holidays and the multiple changes taking place at the school over the summer. What should he have done?

Effectiveness of evocative narrative autoethnography

In this dissertation I set out to answer a question using a particular methodology. In the previous section we reviewed what the data said in response to the research question using a variety of theoretical frames. In this section I wish to determine the extent to which I used the methodology effectively and what advantages this methodology provided. I will also analyze the limitations inherent in such a method. As I proceed with this analysis I will follow the plan as found in the methods section and reply to my basic intentions and assumptions as I go along.

Understanding the world narratively.

The data gathered in chapters four through nine is compiled as a story and that story is claimed to be a true account of events. How did it come out that the events appear as a story? Is life random or is there order? On the science side we tend to agree that there is a mathematical

order to the universe, is there also a storied nature to life? Do lives, our lives, have plot, setting, characterization, conflict, and resolution? It certainly appears so.

One thing that has surprised me is the relative ease with which chapters have taken narrative shape. It has required less craft than I expected. What I mean to say is that rather than constructing a story from elements, it has felt more like finding the story (pattern) that is already there. It confirms Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) description of narrative as structure that shapes or is found within our subjective experiences just as math structures material form. For Clandinin and Connelly (2000) "narrative thinking is a key form of experience and a key way of writing and thinking about it" (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p. 18). "This finding of the story within the data also confirms what Chuang Tzu in Palmer (1990) said about the art work he produced, a bell stand, appearing in a tree before the artist's eyes. The poet in this story claims that had he not seen this tree, he would not have been able to find the bell stand and release it from the tree. In my story I have found a setting (Canadian school in South Korea managed by a Canadian principal with experience teaching and living in Canada, the United States and Kuwait), conflict (the struggle to develop and maintain a school program during ownership conflict in a context with very different cultural expectations than those imbedded within the curriculum and management structures of the school), there is characterization, foreshadowing, dialogue etc. All those things that make for a good story are found within the work place experience waiting to be discovered and recorded as data. Doing a study such as this has allowed me to focus on the meaning of experiences as they emerge out of conditions, rather than identify isolated causes for isolated effects, separate from the larger context.

Could this story have been predicted? Had all the relevant factors been known and measured, all the characters assigned to appropriate roles, all the fluctuations of economy,

politics, weather, genetics, hormonal fluctuations, medication, philosophy, arts, food, etc. all been appropriately analyzed, categorized and placed in a matrix of probable influences, could the story contained in this dissertation have been predicted and its outcomes known in advance and altered to achieve the greatest benefit for the greatest number? And, if that is the case, who could make such decisions of control? Who would be responsible? The grand narrative of science does hope to achieve something to this effect. It hopes to establish the context. But how can we ever hope to gain the complete story?

Narrative researchers investigate the boundary land between personal narrative and grand narrative (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). On the grand scale, we have some idea of how we came to exist on this planet. From the story of science, we understand that we are configured in space / time dimensions. We have some understanding of matter, motion, and energy. We know that humanity has passed through several ages of existence and that we live in a very unusual time of rapid technological development, population growth, and a corresponding impact on the planet including increasing desertification, decreasing availability of land, water and food resources. Schools are part of an economic and political global system that is linked together with all the profound changes we see and some people view schooling as a resource base for dealing effectively with the future (Carnoy, 2007). But where does your story or mine fit in with this? Narrative helps us make the connections. Stories do not offer formulas or techniques but self understanding which can “illumine and help transform our lives” (Palmer, 1990, p.11). My interest in using narrative was not to seek general applications but to find personal uses and applications for myself and potential uses and applications for my readers. In particular I have been searching for meaning in a world that has often appeared more and more meaningless to me as a result of the hyper-, it appears to me, influence of science on society.

Autoethnography.

Not only did I produce a narrative, but it is an evocative autoethnographic narrative. To this extent I set out to define my own life conceived as a micro-culture embedded in layers of other cultures, the culture of my family life, the cultures of teaching, the cultures of educational leadership, the cultures within which I have lived and travelled both within national boundaries as well as cross borders. The goal was to understand one particular problem within these various cultural contexts and within multiple theoretical frames and it was to be done in a manner that would evoke responses in the readers so they might consider the relevance to their own contexts. The goal was to reach diverse audiences with the aim, not merely of learning how to understand, but how to live with the research question. Was this successful? Only reader response will tell me.

My story was intended to be a lens on culture. That is, my account was to be both field of study and lens on the world. My gaze was to look out on the external empirical world of facts and then back to the internal world of experience alternating between wide angle and narrowly focussed views on particular episodes or events in context. Was I able to achieve this balance? To answer this question I wish to go back to the data.

One might notice that as a Canadian I expressed several views of Canada that were not very favorable. Some of the complaints I make are that Canadians are naïve and discontented. I indicate that I am considering returning to Canada but am perplexed by a love/hate relationship with my own country. Yet, I also reveal in my discussions with Ms. Edgar in chapter seven that I feel it is better to suffer abuse than be suspicious all the time and self defending (a clear willingness to be openly naïve). I said that I prefer the concept of downward mobility. Yet, when I think of moving to Canada in chapter nine, I balk at the sinking feeling, suffocating and

immobile. Elsewhere in chapter ten, I express frustration with the teaching of discontent in Canada, calling it educational malpractice, claiming that I am willing to accept any conditions, yet when I think about returning to Canada I demonstrate discontent by my refusal to accept certain elements about being Canadian. Further, I also claim outsider status, making the comment that I don't really want to be an outsider, but doesn't it seem by the claim in chapter seven that I have never really been compelled by people that I make of myself an outsider? Does it not appear I am fighting myself? And, am I not, acting in this manner, peculiarly Canadian? No wonder the Canadian author Robertson Davies (1985) in his novel *What's Bred in the Bone* had an artist explain why there were never any people in Canadian art works, only landscapes. "Don't want 'em... The people stink. Most of 'em, anyway. We paint the country, and maybe after a while the people will stink a little less. Got to begin with the country. That's consolation and exaltation. We have to do it our own way" (Davies, 1985, p. 498). It appears that I, like a true Canadian, would like to return to Canada but prefer that the people not be there.

Sophie Tamas (2013) makes some interesting observations about writing our selves into autoethnographies. She makes the point that if we cannot peer into the minds of others "surely I can eavesdrop on myself and pluck out salient messages from the internal static" (Tamas, 2013, p. 188.) She also claims that "our vulnerability and exposure are the price of seeing something insightful or profound" (Tamas, 2013, p. 187). But, vulnerability and exposure also allows the writer to re-write a future self. The "potential for change has been described in a number of ways, such as epiphanies (Denzin, 1988), catharsis (Ellis, 2004), healing (DeSalvo, 1999), reinvention (hooks, 1999), and transformative learning (Boyd, 2008)" (Berry, 2013, 215). Certainly for me, the realization of my inner conflicted self has opened my eyes to the source of particular frustrations I have at one time thought existed in the external world, but were in fact a

struggle taking place internally. Smith (2006) states, “the practice of truth is nothing less than the practice of finding oneself at home in the world” (Smith, 2006, p. 32) and that teachers have a responsibility to “heal their own estrangements as the necessary qualification leading others home” (Smith, 2006, p. 33). Self awareness and transformation are an advantage of autoethnography, and is particularly appropriate for educational leaders (English, 2008; Senge et al., Semetsky, 2010; Stevens, 1994; Woodward & Funk, 2010).

I speak therefore, not only about Canada, but as a living example of a Canadian who experiences inner conflict related to his culture. I speak about issues related to Canada and Korea particularly as there may be conflicts between the Canadian culture imbedded in the schooling system of British Columbia and the Korean expectations about education. I also make reference to the United States, Kuwait as well as various special interest cultures as well. All of these indicate my own bias, as I speak about conditions around the world. Even if it is through my own lens, one can still learn about the world because the points of conflict (Strati, 1999) or epiphany say something about contact between one’s subjectivity and the external world. If I represent myself truly, then that lens can become an interpretive frame. One thing that seems consistent across all cultures, time and space – that is to say – a universal condition, is the question of objectivity and subjectivity. I believe this struggle between and objective and subjective perspective to be more descriptive of two global cultures (Delanty, 2000), than being Canadian, American or otherwise. In every country I have been to, there are those more aligned to viewing the world from the viewpoint of inner life experience, and those viewing the world from the objective view point of science. To me, the greatest misunderstandings come from conflict in these two realms. Then secondly, if a certain amount of objectivity is accepted, the next set of conflicts arise on how to interpret or apply the facts.

The plan indicated in the methodology section was to look both at and along experience. The case noted above in which I have on one hand wrote my experience as a Canadian in multiple contexts has now been contrasted with my own analysis of the experience causing a consequent epiphany of awareness of my own conflicted emotions as a Canadian rejecting Canada, something I have perhaps been stuck in for some time. This epiphany, along with others, as well as crisis points help us identify the line between external and internal realities and identifying this line leads to further reflections about science and art.

One of the questions I have been mulling through this entire study is where is the line between science and art? Laszlo (2006) talks about two different frames of thinking. One is the scientific frame in which the “concept of physical reality takes off from the content and reference of sensory perception; it takes the world we perceive as a physically real domain situated beyond our perception of it” (Laszlo, 2006, p. 87). The other frame is that formed by spiritual reality which takes off “not from the content and reference of perception, but the very *fact* of perception. We take off from the givenness of conscious experience - in one word, from *consciousness*” (Laszlo, 2006, p. 87). To me, this is a great description of the dividing line between art and science. When I am doing an autoethnography, all the data I record even if it is not following rigorous protocols of measurement, it is still empirical and thus scientific because it takes off from sensory perception. However, as I experience these empirical realities, the representation of these experiences as experiences, not strictly as dispassionate measurements or description constitutes art. The more I am able to intensify this description as experience, the more it becomes art, agreeing with Dewey (1934). The more dispassionate my descriptions, the more scientific they become.

Art or science is basically how we gather our facts and represent them. Art is the intensification of conscious experience when dealing with the facts, for heuristic understanding using metaphor, intuition, wisdom etc. (The story of Lawrence is particularly useful here for an example of the intensified experience of shame; my story of conflicted feeling about Canada is especially good when dealing with the issue of identity). Science is the objectification of experience, focussing on the movement of matter through time and space. It is ultimately a matter of physics. How are these two balanced? They are never really separate. Whether we are dreaming, and thus synapses and neurons are firing, eyes are flitting or if we are experiencing love or hate, our experiences occur within our biology. Whatever we experience, it is happening within the context and connection to material reality. There may be material actions and reactions occurring that are outside our range of experience, but to the extent that we have no awareness of them, they also bear no relevance to anything we can decide or do. However, as soon as we become consciously aware of various facts, they are never separate from experience.

Balancing the arts and sciences as a leader is not a matter of bringing together what has been separated except inasmuch as they are conceived as being separate. The incapacity to be aware of both worlds might be likened to a form of disability or blindness. This can be brought on by trauma, or ideology, or predilection what have you. Something or other may compel us to be excessively interested in solely our experiences or solely the facts. However, it is demonstrable that both functions are valid and should form some aspect of a total life experience. The more successfully we are able to bridge these two worlds, the more likely we are to achieve individuation, Jung's concept of the fully integrated person.

School leaders must surely be conscious of both these dimensions because they participate in the continuously emerging reality of the organization. Billiard ball realities can be

changed by conscious intention, though not always. It is a matter of scale. The mountain we wish to move, is it in our yard or is our yard on the mountain? It is leadership that makes decisions on the movement of such mountains, or alternatively, a decision to do nothing, tunnel through, or reconceptualising the whole task. Such a decision would involve some combination of dealing with measurable cause and effect outcomes and aesthetic sense of appropriateness to the situation – judgement in the absence of a rule.

Validating data and identifying limitations

Autoethnographic research is not judged by the same criteria as found in traditional research. “Criteria like generalizability, objectivity, and reliability to qualitative research is illegitimate; akin to “Catholic questions directed to a Methodist audience” (Guba & Lincoln, 2005, p. 202)” (Tracy, 2010, p. 839). In the following, I wish to make use of Tracy’s eight big-tent criteria for excellent qualitative research as a means to conclude this analysis of the use of autoethnographic methods and to point out limitations in this particular work. The eight criteria are as follows: “(a) worthy topic, (b) rich rigor, (c) sincerity, (d) credibility, (e) resonance, (f) significant contribution, (g) ethics, and (h) meaningful coherence” (Tracy, 2010, p. 840).

Worthy topic.

Regarding this question, the measure of success is in reader response, the coveted comments being, *that’s interesting* rather than *that’s obvious*. This would depend on reader response. To the extent that I am pushing for some elbow room for the arts in a field that seems steeped in the scientific orientation, I hope to elicit some type of resonance or less desirable but still acceptable, dissonance. The divide seems so big that it is hard to imagine the scientific audience being remotely interested in reading something with art in the title. The arts side, may tend toward viewing this work as obvious, yet I do challenge this view as well with the insistence

that there is something to be said about reality being more than a postmodern hall of mirrors. The topic is meaningful to me. It is the reason I persisted through the difficulties of this research in the first place. I also did not wish simply to identify and study some small wheel in the cogs of institutional machinations. Doing so struck me to be the sure path concluding with the reader's exhalation – well, that was obvious!

Rich rigor

In contrast to the need for specificity in quantitative research, a more appropriate concept, borrowed from cybernetics, is applied here – requisite variety. This concept “refers to the need for a tool or instrument to be *at least as* complex, flexible, and multifaceted as the phenomena being studied” (Tracy, 2010, p. 842). Does the data in this work seem as complex as the phenomena being studied? Is there sufficient theory and abundant data allowing for nuance and complexity? I believe there is to the extent that it is possible in a 400 page dissertation. In fact, it was surprising and interesting to me to see at least one fitting example within the data that provided elaboration to each of the theories provided in the conceptual framework to this study.

Included in the demand for rich rigour is the expectation that the writer is sincere, marked by honesty and transparency. I know as a writer I certainly paused multiple times to see if I was being honest or simply presenting a romanticized version of how I like to think things happened. It came as a breakthrough for me to be able to articulate my own personal contradictions and brought some assurance to me that I was being perfectly honest. Another feeling I have is the fear that I may have inadvertently exposed some dark secret coming out of my psyche evident to all except me, publicly available for all to see and critique just as openly. This very hesitance and uncertainty indicate to me, at least, that I have attempted to be sincere and open.

Credibility

Credibility refers to the degree to which I have created an account that seems plausible. I certainly hope so. I have combed through my data again and again in order to convey the events realistically and vividly with literary and poetic techniques. Through the use of zoom shots, where I go into detail about settings, to pan shots where I write in summative manner in order to paint a big picture, to the use of dialogue, humour, emotional intensity, foreshadowing, metaphor, use of fresh images etc. it has been my ambition to engage the body through the senses as much as I have attempted to reach the mind of the reader. In addition, I have removed distracting writing such as excessive adjectives and adverbs, passive verbs, show-not-tell, etc. to prevent the reader from being annoyed by language and distracted from the story. My writing is done with the intention of eliciting tacit responses in my readers, much as reflex response bypasses the brain, going straight to their sensual and bodily responses. This body to body communication hopefully increases the believability of the story.

Crystallization is a concept and method autoethnographers use to make their work credible. Ellingson (2009), a student of Richardson, develops the concept that Richardson first proposed but left unelaborated by defining crystallization as a process which “combines multiple forms of analysis and multiple genres of representation into a coherent text or series of related texts, building a rich and openly partial account of a phenomenon” (Ellingson, 2009, p. 4). She continues the definition and follows with further descriptive comments and examples, in fact an entire book where later Ellingson expands on Richardson’s (1994) statement “crystals are prisms that reflect externalities and refract within themselves” (Richardson, 1994, p. 522) saying that Richardson’s metaphor is pointing to multiple ways of knowing. The most basic division I have identified in this dissertation is the division between knowing about externals and knowing about

internals. It recognizes both objects of knowledge and methods for knowing. A crystal (the data) can reflect externalities, while at the same time refract within itself resulting in an internal dimension corresponding to that externally reflected object. This sort of crystallization occurs both within the data but within the reader as well. To the extent that there is resonance between various elements of the data, or the data and reader response, there is correspondingly a sense of credibility. It is my hope and belief that the data I have presented is credible because of the manner in which I have crystallized the data with multiple genres of writing, and multiple perspectives, most obviously the internal and external ones.

Resonance

Resonance refers to impact and naturally follows the concept of crystallization. With quantitative work this would mean the study's generalizability, however in an evocative narrative autoethnography a more suitable measure would be aesthetic merit. I have worked with my own writing enough to know that it occasions impact. I have also read enough to know that I do not have the kind of poetic facility as the great writers have. Mine is more of a common sense, down to earth aesthetic – much like the bear metaphor. Yet, I do hope this work moves, as Bochner says, the “heart and belly” as well as the “head” (Tracy, 2010, p. 846). The point here is that while it is generally assumed that proper knowledge leads to improved practice, the assumption with qualitative research is that the “feeling of personal knowing and experience is what leads to improved practice” (Tracy, 2010, p. 846; cf Berry, 1989).

Significant contribution

Here Tracy (2010) distinguishes between types of significance: theoretical significance, heuristic significance, practical significance and methodological significance. I think this work contributes in all four areas. Theoretically, I have at the very least, pointed to the need for

researchers to consider if by emphasizing science or art only, they are not perhaps hobbling their work, when it could be more bipedal. Heuristically, I do hope that this work might inspire further exploration or research along the lines that I have established. Practically, it has been my intention that this work “empower participants to see the world in another way” (Tracy, 2010, p. 847), particularly by helping practitioners to better able access their own “practical wisdom and space for transformation” (Tracy, 2010, p. 847). Methodologically, I have chosen a path for research that is a first in the department in which I am studying and not very common in the educational leadership world in general. I am thus making a contribution toward a possible avenue for more research especially research that seeks self knowledge and transformation as a key tool of the educational leader.

I might summarize the contribution this way. Robertson Davies (1981), through his novel *The Rebel Angels*, once said “In a modern university if you ask for knowledge they will provide it in almost any form... but if you ask for Wisdom – God save us all! What a show of modesty, what disclaimers from the men and women from whose eyes intelligence shines forth like a lighthouse. Intelligence, yes, but of Wisdom not so much as the gleam of a single candle” (Davies, 1981, p. 38). This is an artistic way of referring to the theory practice divide that vexes many (Schön, 1987). Autoethnography offers a way to mend the theory / practice divide. Not only mend, but provide a loamy soil for the cultivation of real world problem identification on the ground (science) as well as giving consideration to the weather (climates of subjectivity).

Ethics

The one matter that might be called into question is the issue of ethics. Ethics tends to be debated in autoethnographic circles and this is the degree to which one should be able to represent others without their consent. On the one side, a side that my university takes, if there

are no subjects in your study then there is no need for an ethical review. There are no subjects in this study because it is a study of an artifact I have made, out of my memory. In this sense it is not considered to be about anyone except myself: my views, my experiences etc. The other side of the argument is that, I am writing about people, and presenting them in a light that they may or may not approve of. In some autoethnographies the depictions of those others are vivid and take place in the context of abuse which obviously puts the villains in a very unbecoming light. One writer said, if they did not want to be written about they should not have behaved so badly. This urge to protection of subjects is of course an important consideration, yet it reminds me a bit of the ethic of confidentiality we discussed in our staff meeting. The assumption that all conversations be assumed to be confidential simply pushes too far into a kind of systematization of social life. We are left only with superficiality, and this I believe is something that creates a more dangerous world not less.

Suffice it to say, I have taken precautions where I could. I have made the school anonymous to the extent possible, and characters all have pseudonyms with the exception of my wife, son and mother which are unavoidably transparent. I have shared my work with my mother and my wife and son don't really care. So, as far as my closest relations I am in the clear and the other relations are pretty much obscured.

Meaningful coherence.

This final conceptualization of quality for qualitative research is the degree to which the research has achieved its stated purpose, use appropriate methods and attentively interconnect the relevant literature (Tracy, 2010). To this I can only reply that I have remained consistent in my methods, and meaningfully made use of each of the theoretical bases I began with interconnecting the literature at various points along the way. The main objection I could see

arising to this research is that it is not sufficiently scientific. My reply is that in one sense the accusation is true. It is true in the sense that a balance between art and science is going to require moving far enough on the continuum away from pure or abstract ideas of what science or art is essentially. Science being pure objectivity (anything that exists must be measurable); art being pure subjectivity (nothing at all exists, except as you imagine it). Balancing these two views, would mean moving away from the extreme polarity as I have framed it here. It then simply becomes a matter of judgement about how much science or how much art strikes an appropriate balance. Thus it is a matter of judgement about whether I have included enough science or art to be properly balanced. I think I have at least made my justification clear.

Chapter 11 - Conclusion

It is clear that on every level, with every theory presented here and within the small dense compilation of experiences contained within this account we have examples where both the objective science and subjective art have a balancing role to play in the life of educational leadership. It is different in each case, sometimes more science is enacted, sometimes more art. In general, it appears that science (understood as objective reality) provides common ground upon which we may bring our various subjectivities. Common ground is desirable as it brings us to some ready, perhaps easy agreement. Yet, too much common ground, and we begin to lack adaptive flexibility, also a desirable quality (Eisner, 1992a). The problem is what to do when differences arise? This is where judgement in the absence of a rule (Eisner, 2002) is called for. Art itself has a role in helping us sort out and live with these differences. It is recognized that common facts are friendly but so is the unknown. The dark road that the author so often felt drawn toward seems also to call out to the educational world. If there is something to be learned from this story it is that schools need to become more comfortable with the dark, with uncertainty and dream states, something Eisner notes “is not a pervasive quality of our current educational environment” (Eisner, 2002, p. 210).

Leader identity was a major factor in this research. It became apparent that shifting contexts so often early in life caused the writer to be aware of himself as clearly distinct from his environment. Even so, the writer also reflected on changes he has seen in his own development which was linked to the issue of belonging or not belonging to various groups. The autoethnography allowed him to identify some of his own inner contradictions causing him to recognize his shared national identity with other Canadians. Thus we see both a separation from and historical unity to his Canadian social context.

The advantage of balancing art with science is balance. According to Heller (1999), balance is what keeps the world moving forward. Whatever this world is that we are living in, it definitely includes material and immaterial influences and if we are not *in touch* (Senge et al., 2003), however that may be understood, how can we hope to establish an exchange with the environment into which we were born, and by which we acquire sustenance and pleasure? The tension between these principles cannot finally be resolved (Greene, 1995). O'Reilley calls this tension a koan (O'Reilley, 1998, p. 34) that defies ultimate resolution. Pursuing a balance between art and science is rigorous and demanding in a way that science or art alone cannot conceive. According to Smith (2006) educators desiring the greatest contact with reality (he calls this "truth-as-home") must learn to dwell "in the requirements that the world tells me are necessary for living creatively in it, and refusing a cheaper way" (Smith, 2006, p. 33).

If this research adequately conveys the merits or even necessity of balancing science with art in the field of educational leadership, further research would not only call for balance but because of the present circumstances it would require a much greater input from the arts (Schön, 1987; Strati, 1999). Such studies would not be directed primarily to further prescriptions, but about getting a feeling for the process of artistic and aesthetic engagement (O'Reilley, 1998). From my point of view the degree to which there is a theory practice gap (Houchens & Keedy, 2009; Klein, 1992; McIntyre, 2005), is the degree to which science (objectivity) and the arts (subjectivity) are estranged and thus active research in bringing these two major principles of living together would do much to improve education broadly speaking.

Three areas in education (I include educational leaders in all the following categories) that stand out deserving further study are, in order first, to address educator retention by focussing on resiliency. As this focus develops, it might secondly follow with investigations of

personal and professional transformation leading ultimately to school wide transformation and improvement. That being said, I am not making proposals for policy makers as much as I am pressing for research that empowers and advocates for the teachers who accomplish education. Much is already being done in these areas, however each of them is likely to gain new vigor with the added input from arts and aesthetics. As to each of the foci mentioned above:

1. Educator retention or resiliency (Khalil, 2016, Smith, 2006). If there is a profound “dissonance between what I think I want to find as a teacher and what confronts me in the schooling situation” (Smith, 2006, p. 30) then autoethnographies done by and for educators as well as further studies combining science with art in educational practice may serve to close the gap between expectation and experience and thus improve the difficult facts regarding teacher attrition. While science may disenchant, the arts can reenchant education which may not make the conditions of education more suitable, but it may help the educator face the world of education with the necessary inner resources. This is not to say, we need a new or better trance, rather “the call for a ‘reenchantment of the world’ ... is not a call for mystification. It is a call to break down the artificial boundaries between humans and nature, to recognize that they both form a part of a single universe” (Wallerstein et al, 1996, p. 75).
2. Personal transformation (Pitre, Allen, & Pitre, 2015; Sun, 2009) follows naturally on the previous point. To grow as a teacher is to grow as a person. The profession would do well to consider how educators might move toward personal transformation rather than dealing with fragmentary bits of knowledge and skill in decontextualized frames (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991). George Counts (1932) words are still appropriate today advocating as he does that teachers will not be effective unless they can throw off the

slave psychology that has so dominated them since ancient Greece. One way for teachers to achieve this is to write autoethnographies allowing educational leaders to write their own personal narratives, a necessary prerequisite for transforming the world (Freire, 2000, p. 125). Heller speaks of the dangers of denying one's contingency, arguing strongly that each one of us must "transform this contingency into destiny" (Gardiner, 1997, p. 108). If we do not do so, we will "experience a loss of autonomy and [become] subject to the power of others.... Without developing a coherent selfhood, we lack authenticity, and simply do not have the capacity to act in a consistent and responsible fashion" (Gardiner, 1997, p. 108). Yet, paradoxically, while the cultivated self is the "leader's greatest tool" (Senge et al., 2005, p. 180) such self cultivation means learning to face the death of one's own self concept by recognizing the shadow as part of our selves (Smith, 2006).

3. School improvement – "Can school improvement occur without commitment from teachers? It seems unlikely" according to Eisner (1992b, p. 142). Along with improving the management system, research might encourage teachers' own personal growth and power (Doll, 1993, p. 32) along with knowledge and skills enabling them to respond to educational conditions as they arise. Teacher's creativity needs to be accessed and this will require more attention to personal transformation noted above including a re-enchantment with education. Autoethnography, seeking a balance between science and art, might embrace fuzzy knowledge (Snyder, Acker-Hocevar & Snyder, 2008) making it possible for a school to create its own socially constructed environment. Autoethnography, and a greater emphasis on art, might be thought of a

means for learning how to respond to the natural contingencies that arise, rather than seeking greater control.

There is one New York, but ask anyone to describe it and it will inevitably seem like a very different city depending on the perspective it is told from. So it is with my story and this dissertation. Someone from my school reading this story would most certainly recognize characters in it, but on several points they will question – did that really happen? Or, they might totally disagree and say that I am concocting a fiction. But this is how we live in objective reality as subjective beings. For the sake of this dissertation, the purpose was to provide a particular perspective, tell *my* story. There has been no attempt to get the official and verified version. C.S. Lewis states “I believe there is such a place as New York. I have not seen it myself... I believe it because reliable people told me so” (Lewis, 1952, p. 63.) For as many visitors as there are, each one will tell their tale differently and perhaps even have conflicts when it comes to matters of detail. This should not disturb us. We can still learn a lot about New York and about the tales of adventure in the great city (Taylor, 1998). If we listen with empathetic imagination we can acquire some understanding of how the travelers learned to manage or failed to manage themselves well. There is definite benefit to be gained hearing stories of New York, just as there is in reading reports of the total number of sewer caps broken down by category to so many sewer caps per borough etc. The purposes differ. This autoethnography claims to communicate how the author balanced his internal and external worlds. It is intended, not for the policy expert, but for the educational leader in the field. I am trusting that the reader will see that at the very least a description such as mine is possible (Ellis, 1999), and if so consider what applications may be made.

As much art as it takes to tell a tale, it also takes art to read or listen to it. Such a tale is co-produced. For any artistic skill applied in the creation of this story, there will need to be a corresponding artistic skill applied in the reading of it. Thus a major limitation of the work is that it demands skills that are perhaps not common in a field dominated by a science orientation where critical, analytical and argumentative are more likely descriptors of the common academic reader than creative, holistic and empathetic. The writing that seeks a balanced understanding of the field, also seeks a balanced reader. One way that autoethnographers have responded to the challenge for objective truthfulness is to heighten transparency and emotion (Berry, 2013) and that autoethnography “calls for the heightened engagement of others” (Berry, 2013, p. 213). This means that as I make myself more vulnerable, I am calling for the vulnerability of my readers and this call for reader vulnerability initiates the practice of social constitution. This means that beyond being a purely descriptive account, I am also living for the maybe of how things might become (Denzin, 2006). One such maybe, is that by writing accounts such as mine, more people will become capable of learning from them in ways profitable to themselves but also to educational leadership more specifically.

A key goal for autoethnography is to create emotional resonance (Anderson, 2006). As a writer I seek either to elicit deep appreciation or less preferably opposition. The worst case would be apathy. For a reader to remain unaffected, would it seem, be an indication of ineffectiveness and a sign for a reconsideration of the value of the work. This seeking of a reaction is perhaps the key to the entire work, including the question and the methodology. If there is one word that appears time and again throughout this research it is the word vulnerability. If science is about control, the move I make to balance science with art will involve less control. As we practitioners move away from science to art, seeking to find a

balance, we move to a humbler position with less predictability. We get closer to the earth. But how else can one lead a school, which is at least as much human as it is an institution?

Charles Taylor (1991) a Canadian philosopher articulates a malaise that has come over the modern world in which individualism, instrumental reason and technology have served to undermine meaning, a sense of the sacred and freedom. He calls this condition disenchantment and proposes that one route forward, rather than backward, to a re-enchantment with life would be a proper understanding and elevation of the ethic of authenticity which is both a modern and romantic value. I believe that such a move toward authenticity can only be accomplished as an act of imaginative realism.

In that spirit, I bring to mind my long-held feeling of identification with the hobbit in *Lord of the Rings* (Tolkien, 1954). The hobbit is a character who lives in a cave, has plenty of larders filled to the brim with cakes and ales. He has furry feet and loves his comforts. This is an authentic description of an attitude I have at one time held toward life. In recent years, I described myself in this manner to one of the teachers in the science department for which I was head. As I indicated to him that I was like the hobbit, he interrupted saying “I disagree!”

I was surprised and inquired of his thoughts. He replied “You’re the wizard.” Perhaps he was right. Dr. Eugenie Samier tells me the Bear totem of the West coast represents the magician (Eugenie Samier, personal communication November 30, 2016). Interesting – magician, wizard, bear.

I started this doctoral degree many years ago by taking a few courses for professional development. However, once I decided to convert these courses into a doctoral undertaking, I discovered that from the first course, the clock was already ticking. Since that time I feel to some extent that I have been lost to the world. I was gaining weight, losing sleep, getting grey hair. At

times I despaired that I would ever complete my dissertation. Now here I am at the end of the work and I found myself recently describing the following to my brother. “Do you remember that scene in Lord of the Rings where Gandalf the Grey is taken or slain by the Balrog at the bridge of Khazad-dum? Gandalf is out of the story for a long portion of the tale following this incident. We understand him to have died. But he returns to the plot, and when he does he is Gandalf the white and his powers have been significantly increased. That is how I feel now. I feel I have gone through a terrible ordeal, and well, perhaps something in me has died in the process, making me stronger.”

Smith (2006) says that in order to respond to the requirements of the world we sometimes need to be willing to die to our self concept. That may very well be what has taken place as a result of the life I lived with the work of this dissertation and the life it reports on. Like Gandalf the Grey dying under the Misty Mountains, my self concept as a comfort loving hobbit has been slain as I have been challenged to accept another identity, that of the wizard, or returning to the theme associated with it, the bear. I have left the den of self absorption and while remaining a contemplative I have turned my back on the comforts of life, choosing (or perhaps more accurately, learning) to live exposed to unpredictable forces where, yes one is more vulnerable, but in that very vulnerability one finds a life of vigour and vivid experience. It is here that I have discovered my home and a life more in tune with the rhythm of reality. The life and spirit of the bear magician is my own personal trance of course, but a trance or enchantment that helps me to live more powerfully connected with the real world of external encounters than any time before.

Taylor (1998), citing Dennis Quinn states, “through the Muses the fearful abyss of reality first calls out to that other abyss that is the human heart” (Taylor, 1998, p. 159). Dewey the following “There is always some measure of adventure in the meeting of mind and universe, and

this adventure is in its measure, imagination” (Dewey, 1934, p. 278). And Jung said symbols make “possible the development of the personality, the resolution of conflicts, and the transcendence of polar oppositions... [possessing] a transcendent function, facilitating all transitions from one psychological state to another. Symbols are, therefore, indispensable to healing and the individuation of the Self” (Stevens, 1994, p. 108). What better way to summarize the project I have undertaken? I have gone on an adventure in educational leadership and have invited my reader to come with me as we reach out to the depths of reality with the depths of our hearts. Returning from an adventure, one is never quite the same as before the journey began. I hope the same is true for those who have travelled with me.

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Biography

Kelly Card is a citizen of Canada, and as such claims to be citizen of the world. His ancestors hail from France, Ireland, Ukraine, Norway, and Germany and he is married to a Thai wife. He has lived and worked in four different countries and has his summer home in a fifth. Despite his extensive experience living and working abroad, this country boy who was born in a six bedroom hospital never had any ambitions of leaving the land he loves. His heart remains in Canada, though Thailand has become his adopted second home where he, his wife and son go during the hot summer months. Presently, Kelly continues to work in South Korea as a principal.