The purpose of this dissertation is to inquire into, critically explore, and share thoughtful possibilities for teaching and living with ecological integrity. Ecological integrity is defined as the ideal of coherence between one’s actual, day-to-day habits of mind and body, and one’s ecologically based morals, principles, or ethical ideals. Ecological educators often sense contradiction between their ecological ideals and their day-to-day lives. Recognizing that many ecological injustices have their roots in socio-cultural patterns of instrumentalism and anthropocentrism, they see how the educational institutions in which they work reflect and reproduce the injustices they aim to counteract. In this research, I study how three respected, ecological, postsecondary educators negotiate their resistance to and re-inscription of ecologically problematic norms. While this research does not intend to preach, oversimplify, serve as a “recipe,” or glorify these educators, it does suggest that there are lessons, challenges and inspirations to be had from sharing stories of the aspirations and actualities of these educators’ lives. The question at the forefront of this research is: How do respected educators who recognize and critique the ways in which dominant, modern, institutionalized education contributes to ecological concerns, work toward and conceptualize ecological integrity within their personal and professional lives?

Using a combination of narrative and ethnographic inquiry called “portraiture,” I explored participants’ professional educational practice and their personal home and community lives, inquiring into their varied conceptions and enactments of ecological integrity. As part of this inquiry, I engaged with participants during week-long site visits, pre- and post-visit interviews, and reviews of their publications. Theme- and aesthetic-based analyses were conducted to create three deeply detailed stories of participants. While the stories themselves represent much of the “results” of the research, the dissertation also analyzes participants’ varied conceptions of contradiction and complicity, their chosen commitments, their decisions to “opt out” of certain practices, and their self assessments of ecological integrity, each of which carry both personal and collaborative dimensions. In conclusion, this research does not suggest one, final definition of ecological integrity, but rather offers readers a range of interpretations upon which they can reflect and build their own.


SELECTED PRESENTATIONS


