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The Practice of Citizenship as Support for Deep Ecology

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CHUCK CHAMBERLIN: After teaching elementary school for ten years, I completed my MA and PhD at the University of Minnesota. I moved to Edmonton in 1969 and taught social studies and environmental education to undergraduates, and research methodology and critical theory in the graduate program in Elementary Education at the University of Alberta for 27 years. Interest in citizenship education led to research in elementary schools in the United States, Canada, China, Korea, Japan, Spain, Denmark and Sweden. Some of the results are presented in my book, Don't Tell Us It Can't Be Done, along with articles in Canadian, British, American, Spanish and Chinese journals. Interest in citizenship education led to activity in municipal, provincial and federal political parties, membership in the NDP Green Caucus, organizing rallies, demonstrations, and being arrested at one of them. When I read the 8 principles of The Deep Ecology Movement, it seemed the eighth one was essential to the other seven ever being achieved, and this article is the product of that conviction.
In retirement, I enjoy canoeing on Pigeon Lake, learning the year's cycle of loons and herons arriving, nesting, rearing young, and migrating again. The complexity of life there contrasts sharply to the monoculture farming around the lake where four crops replace the multitude of plant and animal species that thrived there during my grandmother's lifetime. The need for inclusiveness of caring strikes me everytime I go out to the lake, and reminds me of the need to transform our anthropocentric consumer culture.

> Unless the new forms of community extend beyond traditional humanistic bounds to include the community of Nature, the game is up. (Rowe, 1990, p. 77)

The current spread of individualism in developed countries reflects a failure of the citizenship function of social studies education. Citizens are members of communities who care enough about each other to act for the welfare of all. Yet today we witness rampant amorality in both the political and economic systems, reflecting the selfishness and egocentrism of those in power. Hutton (1996) argues "it is amoral to run a society founded on the exclusion of so many people from decent living standards; it is amoral to run an economy in which the only admissible objective is the maximization of shareholder value; it is amoral to run a political system in which power is held exclusively" (p. 24). Citizenship requires strong enough identification with broader communities to lead people to live their lives in ways that are socially, economically, politically, and environmentally responsible. That means willingness to pay taxes to fund social safety nets, to provide sound health and education programs, and to consume no more

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than the planet can renew in our lifetime. Yet, we see Canadian, provincial and federal governments elected to cut taxes, cut the social, health, and education programs, and reduce environmental regulations. Where have we failed?

Andrew McLaughlin (1993) argues that part of the problem has been the lack of political organization and action.

> The real problem is the behemoth of industrialism ever expanding its grip, around the globe, beneath the earth, and into the skies. The seeds of an effective and radical ecocentrism live in those who somehow awaken to the exhilaration of being human in harmony with the rest of nature. Some may choose to stand for the forests, and that is good. Others, however, must reach out to the oppressed of the world and build bridges between the poor who live within the industrial world and those at the periphery. (p. 224)

McLaughlin cites the eight platform principles of the Deep Ecology Movement developed by Naess and Sessions, as stated in Devall and Sessions (1985, p. 70). These eight principles build a rationale for holistic identity and culminate in responsibility for action to achieve a new inclusive society.

Basic Platform Principles of the Deep Ecology Movement

1. The well-being and flourishing of human and nonhuman life on Earth have value in themselves (synonyms: intrinsic value, inherent value). These values are independent of the usefulness of the non-human world for human purposes.
2. Richness and diversity of life forms contribute to the realization of these values and are also values in themselves.
3. Humans have no right to reduce this richness and diversity except to satisfy vital needs.
4. The flourishing of human life and cultures is compatible with a substantial decrease of the human population. The flourishing of nonhuman life requires such a decrease.
5. Present human interference with the nonhuman world is excessive, and the situation is rapidly worsening.
6. Policies must therefore be changed. These policies affect basic economic, technological, and ideological structures. The resulting state of affairs will be deeply different from the present.

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7. The ideological change is mainly that of appreciating life quality (dwelling in situations of inherent value) rather than adhering to an increasingly higher standard of living. There will be a profound awareness of the difference between big and great.

8. Those who subscribe to the foregoing points have an obligation directly or indirectly to try to implement the necessary changes. (p. 70)

Action is needed, and social studies is the logical vehicle to develop the active citizens who will be informed actors. David Orr (1992, p.40) cautions that we must wake up from our "sleepwalks along the edge of catastrophe," since "the nightmare hanging over humanity is that we will lack the intellectual clarity, good will, and moral power needed to make wise decisions with all this portends for whether and how humanity survives."

As noted in an earlier article (Chamberlin, 1991), social studies curricula have largely taught students to be passive knowers rather than active doers. Naess and McLaughlin challenge us to change from transmitting knowledge to engaging students in political action for goals they choose for themselves. As a British philosopher put it, "knowledge is not power. Action based on knowledge is power." Conversely, learned passivity is disempowerment. Social studies curricula need to be extended to meet Naess's challenge to be inclusive of all life on Earth, and to provide for active citizenship.

Hanna (1957, 1966) maintained that each person holds citizenship responsibilities in a number of different communities. Children should follow a grade level sequence of studying basic human activities in each of these communities, beginning with the most immediately experienced, the family community, then moving outwards to increasingly broad and inclusive communities.

This article intends to expand Hanna's work to provide a potential model for practicing and living a citizenship of support for Deep Ecology within an ethic of caring.

The Deep Ecology Movement and the Expanding Environments Curriculum

Forty years ago Paul Hanna (1957) began advocating a social studies curriculum based on the study of social groups in expanding environments. At each grade level a larger community was the focus of the program. To the traditional time and space dimensions of history and geography, Hanna added the caring dimension. Community may be defined as those whose welfare we care about enough to take action. Those who participate in community decisions about the welfare of members share governance in their role as citizens making democracy

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work. Not surprisingly, social studies has usually been justified for inclusion in the school curriculum for its contribution to educating citizens for participation in democratic communities. If communities are those we care about, the development of increasingly inclusive communities of caring may be seen as maturation in democratic citizenship. Criteria for maturity might include intensity of caring and extent of inclusion.

Intensity of Caring

A continuum of intensity of caring might range from apathy to investing time, energy, wealth, and action on behalf of community members.

Apathy Effort

As maturity increases, citizenship becomes more proactive, reflecting commitment to improving the welfare of all community members, including oneself. Shaftel (1967), Nodding (1984, 1992), Piaget (1965) and others suggest that as children take roles of others (role playing) and experience the community from their perspective, they become increasingly sensitive and sympathetic to the needs of others. Noddings (1992, p. 20) indicates that caring should include caring for self, for people close to you, for strangers and distant others, for animals, plants, and the Earth, for the human-made world, and for ideas. A curriculum designed to promote maturity in caring in keeping with both Nodding's ethic of caring and Hanna's expanding environments would then help children experience the roles, feelings, and viewpoints of others in present and immediate communities, moving to future and past members in more inclusive and remote communities in higher grades. Such a curriculum would provide numerous opportunities in both the formal and informal curriculum for these experiences to take place.

Noddings insists that caring must be recognized as a valid curricular goal, including caring for the environment (1992, p. 188). "I suspect we teach an unfortunate lesson when we suggest that geometry is worth learning for itself, but that caring - for the elderly or for children or for animals or, indirectly, for everyone by maintaining the environment - must be 'paid work'." Noddings elaborated this belief in a chapter on caring for the Earth (1992). "We live in an age of increasing concern about air and water pollution, ozone depletion, overpopulation, loss of forests, and extinction of species and subspecies. But our commitment is undermined by a continual press for progress and expansion, by demands for resources, and of course by greed. Schools give some attention to environmental problems, but they are not giving enough to the development of caring human beings. Their curricular treatment of environmental issues is still too abstract, and the extracurricular approach, recycling, for example, is too limited."

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Extent of Inclusion

In addition to intensity, a second criterion for maturity of caring might be growing inclusiveness. As children come to see that their personal welfare is inseparable from others in wider and wider communities, their identity should broaden. Naess (1989, p.14), for 30 years chair of the philosophy department at Oslo University in Norway, has suggested that "with maturity, the self is widened and deepened. We see ourselves in others." The term *others* is used by Naess to refer to all species of plants and animals, not just the human species. He sees *others* as inclusive, not exclusive, and believes that the notions of care, respect, responsibility, and knowledge are applicable to beings in the wide sense. He quotes Erich Fromm as saying "Love of others and love of ourselves are not alternatives." If we have a strong emotional identification with a wide community of others, we must care for this broad Self as well as for the immediate self. Naess believes that our community, being the place we live and all others in that place, is part of Self. Consequently, "My relation to this place is part of myself. If this place is destroyed something in me is destroyed. My relation to this place is such that if the place is changed I am changed." (p. 20)

Naess (1974) was influenced by Gandhi, who believed that our goal must be the realization of the universal Self. Consequently, "through the wider Self every living being is connected intimately, and from this intimacy follows the capacity of identification, and as its natural consequences, the practice of non-violence." (p. 22-23). We would surely not knowingly hurt ourselves, and where we identify with all others, we would not do violence to others knowing that we would thereby do violence to ourselves. Naess explains that "Gandhi made manifest the internal relations between self-realization, non-violence and what sometimes has been called biospherical egalitarianism" (p. 23).

The Saskatchewan botanist and ecologist Stan Rowe (1990) also speaks of this anthropocentrism.

> From the precept that only humans matter, a disastrous corollary follows: The world is for exploiting. Parks are for people, animals are for shooting, forests are for logging, soils are for mining. The sole basis for ethical action is the greatest good for the "greatest number of people." Morality "is completely in-turned, completely focused on humankind." This becomes "*People first*". Five billion people going for ten, all believing in *People first*, increasing their wants without limit, are a sure recipe for species suicide." (p. 51-52)

Naess (in Drengson, 1995, p.25) goes even further including all plant and animal species in his community. As we increasingly find evidence of the harm our lifestyle and culture do to nature, we must develop a still broader identity and community: "Now it is time to share with all life on our maltreated Earth

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through the deepening identification with life forms and the greater units, the ecosystems and Gaia, the fabulous, old planet of ours." And, as Earth has endured for billions of years and is likely to continue for more billions of years, our identity must be stretched to include not just all others now comprising Earth, but must reach backward and forward in time to include all past, present, and future others. This will bring greater joy, because

> Part of the joy stems from the consciousness of our intimate relation to something bigger than our ego, something which has endured through millions of years and is worth continued life for millions of years. The requisite care flows naturally if the self is widened and deepened so that protection of free Nature is felt and conceived as protection of ourselves. (p. 26)

This stretching of community to be wholly inclusive may seem to be too much to strive for, but Naess (1989) believes we have underestimated human potential. He says the most important feature of Self-realization "is its dependence upon a view of human capacities, better potentialities" (1989, p.280). Naess (1995) concludes his article with an optimistic challenge to all humans:

> The rich reality is getting even richer through our specific human endowments; we are the first kind of living beings we know who have the potentialities of living in community with all other living beings. It is our hope that all those potentialities will be realized.. (p. 30)

For social studies curriculum this challenge would suggest that Hanna's expanding environment was headed in the right direction, but stopped too soon. Rather than being limited to humans, the environment should include at each level the others in that community, plants, animals, and other things, past, present, and future. Rather than the Grade 1 theme being limited to the human family, it needs to be extended to include the flora and fauna that once lived where their home is. Children need to learn about the habitat that once existed where present monoculture farming now provides their food and where present clearcut forestry provides the lumber for their homes and paper for their use. This would involve learning about alternatives to their present consumer oriented lifestyle. Children could also learn about future others that might share their ecosystem if they consumed less and walked more gently on the Earth. Certainly it would mean learning more about previous Aboriginal cultures who once lived on the land with respect for the other species who inhabited it. It would mean social studies would have to help children develop wider and deeper identities with

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others in broader and broader communities in past, present, and future, and care deeply enough about these communities to act on their behalf. Thus, social studies becomes an agent for social transformation, making all communities better places to live together.

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