

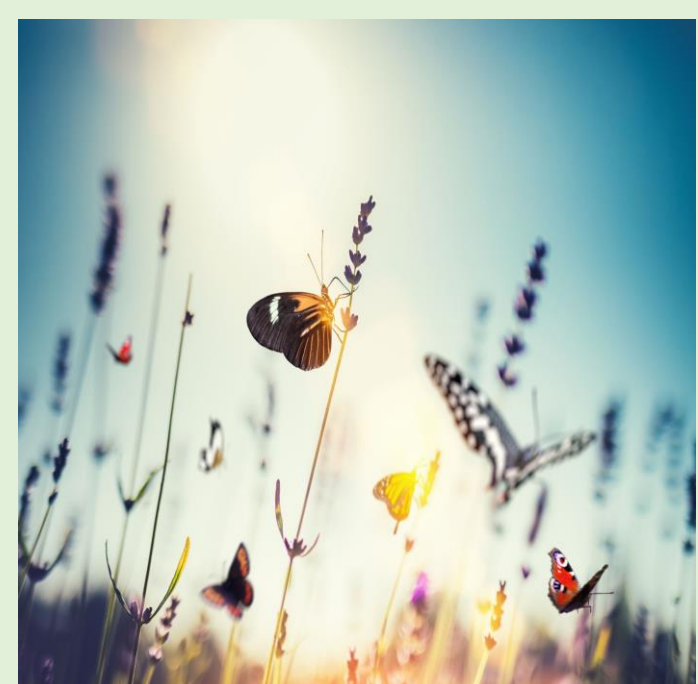
# My Life – My Story – My First Year as a Doctoral Student

## MY THOUGHTS BEFORE THE PROGRAM STARTED:

“As a life-long learner, I am encouraged and open to learn how I can learn better. I feel that the field of Educational Sustainability resonates with my mind and spirit and will support my life and professional goals. I hope to help change the world for the better based on what I learn over the next three years. I like to see positive change and believe that education will help not only me but also help other people understand the complexity of the world around them. My work most aligns with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 Quality Education, which ensures inclusive and equitable quality education and promotes lifelong learning opportunities for all.”

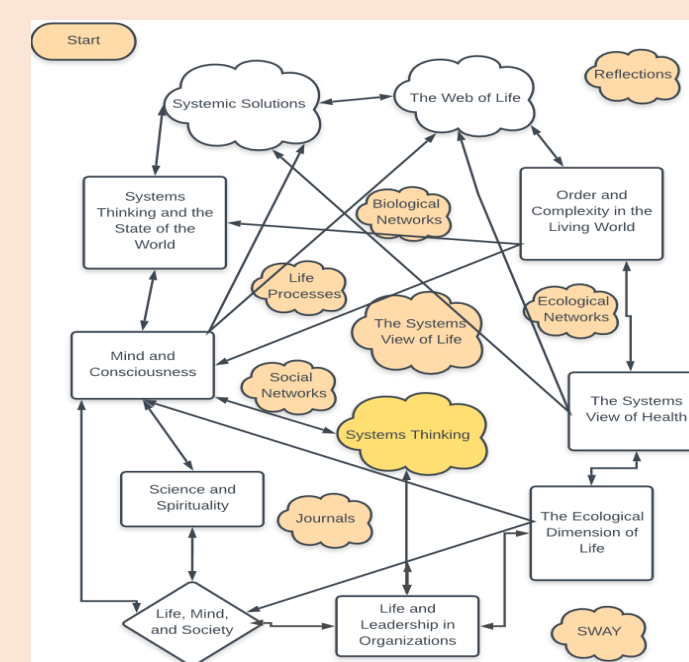


Education is the most effective means that society possesses for confronting the challenges of the future. Indeed, education will shape the world of tomorrow” (UNESCO, 2017)



SUMMER 2019

- Introduction to Doctoral Studies and Sustainability Literacy
- Global Environmental Change



FALL 2019

- Historical and Philosophical Foundations of Environmental and Sustainability Education
- Ecological Foundations for a Sustainable Society



SPRING 2020

- Reorienting Curriculum and Programs for a Sustainable Future
- Transformative Sustainability Teaching and Learning

**My Journey** DISCOVERED AND THEN IMMERSED INTO THE WORLD OF SYSTEMS THINKING AND TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING AS AN APPROACH

The implications for me as an educator are growing as I continue on this journey of studying social justice and sustainability. In Reframing the Curriculum, Santone (2019) discussed relationships and connections with nature and how important it was for curriculum to always make those connections. Throughout the chapters, Santone shared stories and made connections that I could personally relate to and make connections with. In each chapter, I was drawn deeper into the discussions on interdependence, connectedness, and hope. This made me realize that I have a responsibility to take a more active role in developing curriculum to address what is at stake.

**Question: What are the benefits and challenges of seeing the world in a more connected way?**

A systems approach helps people understand the complexity of the world around them and encourages them to think in terms of relationships, connectedness, and context; and the systems view of life is crucial for finding these solutions. But they all require a radical shift in our perceptions, our thinking, our values. In science, this kind of thinking is known as "systems thinking," or "systemic thinking." (Capra, 2014)

**Question: How do we help people understand this?**

While reading Ecological Literacy: Education and the Transition to a Postmodern World, David Orr, refers to servant leadership in the chapter "Fragments of Strategy". He states, "Robert Greenleaf once proposed a model of "servant leader," one who is a servant first and leader second. Greenleaf contrasts what he calls the "servant-first" type, who is motivated to serve, with the "leader-first" type, who leads because of innate drives for power, recognition, or wealth. In contrast to the widespread assumption that leaders are first and foremost charismatic personalities, the servant leader emerges through a "long arduous discipline of learning to listen, first". (Orr, 1992).

**Question: Do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? And, what is the effect on the east privileged in society: will they benefit, or at least, not be further deprived?**

O'Sullivan (2004) states that educational institutions aligned with industrialism, nationalism, competitive individualism, and patriarchy must be questioned. My favorite comments were that 'we are made of star stuff', and 'not only are we star-lings but earthlings' as we look at the dynamic processes experienced in the 'web of life' opening our human vision to the interplay of all natural phenomena and their interrelatedness. Transformative educational vision is assumed that the primary educator is the whole earth community. Education within a larger universe context must be seen as a pervasive life experience. Educational endeavors need a story that is cultural, historical and cosmological context of meaning that can be accepted on a broad scale by person of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Educational institutions must continue to assess their roles within this cosmological perspective.

**Question: How do I share my voice and align my worldview within this transformative educational vision?**

## Positionality

As an educator who believes in transforming systems of teaching and learning and examining it from the learner's perspective, I lean heavily towards Learner Centered (LC) ideology. Theories I relate to are developmental, constructivist, and developmental psychology, all identified with the LC ideology. In addition, transformative learning, relational, psychoanalytical, developmental, and psycho-critical theories are also theories of interest. These areas are dependent on the learner and the learning outcome that support whole systems thinking and design and are my lens into how I see the world and the relationship within it.

## Problem Statement

Learning organizations acquire knowledge and innovate fast enough to survive and thrive in a rapidly changing environment. My observable sustainability and educational challenge/issue or wicked problem is that I believe my work offers a transitioning guide from a "system of problems" to a "systems of solutions", however my ability to pursue the continuum of ideas of development, sustainability and regeneration often falls short as it involves rethinking the curriculum, campus operations, organizational culture, student participation, leadership and management, community relationships and research in an environment that can change quickly.

## Research Project

In order to align workplace learning with Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), that workplace must incorporate transformative learning, but in order to do that it must mainstream sustainable practices into all elements of organizational operations. Transformational learning refers to those learning experiences that cause a shift in an individual's perspective. It is based on the idea that learning is "the process of making a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of an experience" (Mezirow, 1990). This happens when adult learners change their assumptions or expectations. Much of the research in transformational learning examines learners in an academic environment. It is exciting to think about transformations that can occur in a workplace environment.

EDSU 904 Project 2 TL Seminar Analysis Presentation Blurb (4/2020) –

"I find that the theory and application are finally coming together for me or should I say the process and the content. The chapter I read, not only helped me understand Transformative Learning better, but I was able to apply the reading to my current working world. I could see myself in the reading and could totally relate to the problem statement. As always, when I prepare a presentation, I learn to synthesize the material better. It is so much richer for me than just reading or writing, due in large part to not only having to present the material but also needing to be prepared to answer questions. Though slightly intimidated to present content to such an amazing audience (classmates), their encouragement lifts me up. What a wonderful experience being in a psychologically safe learning environment. This along with many other learning experiences in our course, has helped me change my mental model."



Debbie Young  
EDSU 904 – Transformative Sustainability Teaching and Learning  
Artifact #2 Competency #1  
Dr. Joy O'Neil  
Ed.D. Program in Educational Sustainability  
University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point

## References

Capra, F., & Luisi, P. L. (2014). *The systems view of life : A unifying vision*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Mezirow, J. (1990). *Fostering critical reflection in adulthood : A guide to transformative and emancipatory learning* (First ed., Jossey-Bass higher education series). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

O'Sullivan, E., & Taylor, Marilyn M. (2004). *Learning toward an ecological consciousness : Selected transformative practices*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Orr, D. (1992). *Ecological literacy: Education and the transition to a postmodern world*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Santone, S. (2019). *Reframing the Curriculum: Design for Social Justice and Sustainability*. Routledge.

UNESCO. 2017. *Education for Sustainable Development Goals: learning objectives*. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000247444?posInSet=1&queryId=4d0a3b19-5051-4037-88bb-e57684cd885b.pdf> (Accessed 10 July 2019)