Chapter 1
An Ecocritical Conceptual Framework Toward Ecotistical Pedagogies

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The past decades of environmental education (EE) scholarship have been marked by strong critiques of how neoliberal policies and reform efforts have contributed to an erosion of valuing the gravity of our human dependencies on the health of diverse species and ecosystems on the planet. In fact, we are living in frightening times in which ignoring the very real impacts of climate change have become an everyday part of global politics. However, environmental educators have long now maintained the importance of valuing and acting in defense of diversity as a core foundation of democratic life, and many EE researchers and environmental educators have committed to the possibilities of addressing the cultural roots of social justice and sustainability in a myriad of scholar-activist ways. Considering the stark conditions for life on the planet due to climate change, poverty, famine, and increased violent conflict, scholar-activist environmental educators are more than ever presented with the challenge of rethinking EE and doing so with close attention to what can be done differently. In this era, one in which global climate change is threatening the very existence human and more-than-human communities, it is from the position of an ecocritical teacher educator and EE researcher that I suggest we turn our attention toward the possibilities of radically reconsidering the purpose, and the associated procedures and practices, of not only EE but also of PreK-12 schooling in its entirety. In this chapter, I introduce an ecocritical framework for EE with a focus on working with teachers and recognizing that within the important relationships between EE, teacher preparation, and higher education, there exist the opportunity for critically addressing and rethinking current dominant conceptual frameworks constituting classrooms, schools, and communities. Furthermore, I share how anthropocentrism in connection with assumptions of human supremacy become a distinguishable focal point for ecocritical pedagogies. Concluding, I share some
actions that I have found to be helpful in taking steps toward what I propose—echoing diverse indigenous epistemologies—is a shift from egotism to ecotism enacting ecotistical pedagogies with(in) EE and teacher education.

Responding to the systemic violence and exploitation perpetuated by the current dominant social, economic, and environmental contexts in North America (similar to other nation states imbued in Western industrial culture), ecocritical environmental educators examine and address how it is that schools in Western industrial culture create, support, and sustain the habits of mind that rationalize, justify, and (re)produce unjust social suffering and devastating amounts of environmental degradation. When faced with such a challenge, ecocritical educators ask, How is it that exploitation is rationalized, justified, and/or (re)produced through how we teach? Coupled with that question, ecocritical educators and researchers in EE are also committed to turning the critical lens inward and asking: What can EE researchers, educators, and activists do to teach in support of alternatives to Western industrial culture? In an attempt to address these questions, I draw on collaborative work with diverse colleagues to introduce what is referred to as an ecocritical approach to exploring the possibilities of diverse critical ecological perspectives in EE research and teacher education.

An ecocritical approach addresses how education is influenced by systems of exploitation and violence, systems which rely on a refusal to acknowledge and embrace mutuality and interdependence (Lupinacci & Happel-Parkins, 2015). Ecocritical scholars use diverse critical lenses for addressing and rethinking dominant cultural frameworks, but certain principles remain at the center of the work. Specifically rooted in and yet pushing the boundaries of the critical tradition, teacher educators positioned within the ecocritical movement recognize that social and environmental justice are inseparable and inextricably linked, and that these injustices rely on the perpetuation of value-hierarchized social thought. In order to dismantle such injustices, then, we must analyze the culturally constituted value hierarchies our society has created. This approach also includes exploring alternative knowledges and ways of understanding difference that move beyond the limitations of Eurocentric (or Western industrial) thought.

Introducing Ecocritical Pedagogies

Ecocritical pedagogies in EE and teacher education is aimed at engaging teachers in identifying and critically examining the role that education both plays, and ought to play, in transitioning toward supporting diverse, socially just, and sustainable communities. Drawing from an EcoJustice Education framework (Martusewicz et al., 2015) and stemming from the growing field of ecocritical work in social and cultural foundations of education, I summarize the movement’s aims in three aspects that frame ecocritical perspectives as working with teachers to critically and ethically:
1. Examine Western industrial culture and its impacts on social and environmental systems.
2. Examine value-hierarchized dualisms that contribute to inequities such as racism, classism, sexism, ableism, and anthropocentrism.
3. Examine and identify how to teach or share skills, and habits of mind, that support socially just and environmentally sustainable communities (Lupinacci & Happel-Parkins, 2016).

Simply put, through an ecocritical framework, teacher educators work to support scholar-activist educators in recognizing two conflicting and foundationally different worldviews—ecological worldviews of interdependence and interspecies equity and a dominant human-centered, capitalist, racist, ableist, heteronormative, and patriarchal worldview. Simultaneously, this framework shapes research in teacher education that also examines how those worldviews might be reconstituted—via education or ecocritical pedagogies—in ways that are local and in support of living systems (Lupinacci, 2013, 2015).

Ecocritical pedagogies often include students—together with their teachers: (a) recognizing that the role of teacher can be taken on by more-than-human members of any learning community; (b) examining how knowledge systems—in relationship to language, culture, and power—are culturally constructed; and (c) how educators can play a role in reconstituting those relationships. By highlighting that our cultural belief systems, root assumptions, and narratives are constructed and not simply “natural,” educators can help students develop critical perspectives on these root beliefs. This undertaking also opens the space for recognizing exploring alternative belief systems and metaphors that facilitate different kinds of relationships with other people, other beings, and the land.

An ecocritical framework also illuminates the systematic, economic, and political restructuring of lives that further perpetuates social suffering and environmental degradation. What has become commonplace over the past century, and extending into the current, is the intentional restructuring of relationships to control and commodify lives in order to maintain and manufacture markets. For example, food and water are life-sustaining elements necessary for supporting healthy communities. However, the relationships to these “resources” have been enclosed—monetized or understood as commodities to be earned and purchased. This iteration of capitalism—supply and demand economic systems predicated on exploitation—works to enclose living systems and can be understood as the globalizing force to commodify and privatize that which is common and public.

In short, ecocritical pedagogies center student learning on recognizing the importance of examining intellectual, environmental, and cultural practices and traditions in regard to how they either support or undermine living systems together with whatever content is being taught. Whether examining discursive practices or economic structures while learning mathematics, language arts, science, or social studies, a key feature of ecocritical pedagogies is the recognition that human knowledge systems are culturally constructed, have consequences for all living beings, and can be re-imagined in transformative ways (Turner, 2015). A distinguishing aspect of
ecocritical pedagogies is that: Whatever the lesson or activity, students and teachers together are addressing the powerful role that their culture plays in the development of themselves, their values, and their diverse relationships. Such a framework examines, explores, and proposes diverse and collaborative pedagogical projects that respond to current dominant belief systems and works to ensure that any responses are necessarily collaborative with diverse cultures in ways that are local, situational, and in support of decentralized living systems.

A primary premise in ecocritical work that differentiates the approach from most other critical frameworks is that ecocritical educators assert that situated at the root of social and ecological injustice is a fundamental—and problematic—premise that humans, as a species, are understood (or self-identify) as superior to and somehow separate from all other living beings and nonliving things. Thus, guiding ecocritical pedagogies is the understanding that the manifestation of a human-supremacist worldview is culturally constructed and inextricable from current dominant cultural assumptions about race, class, gender, ability, age, and so forth. A foundational premise in ecocritical work in education is that cultural habits of mind in dominant Western industrial culture are based on a system of human supremacy—stemming from anthropocentrism—and that such a perspective is pervasive throughout how we as humans in Western industrial culture learn to interpret and assign value to differences.

The World Is Burning…So Why Should I Care

There are approximately 7.8 billion people in the world. Despite a growing awareness of human rights, the circumstances of an estimated 700 million people living in extreme poverty are dire (United Nations, 2014). Most often, women and children bear the brunt of this tragic, and at times fatal, suffering. The United Nations Children’s Fund (2016) reports that “Unless the world tackles inequity today, in 2030: 69 million children under the age of 5 will die between 2016 and 2030” (p. 3), and the outlook for the world’s impoverished youth is becoming increasingly grim. The United Nations (2015) reports that since 1990, global carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions “have increased by over 50 per cent since 1990” (p. 8) and scientists have argued that this increase in CO₂ emissions is linked to changes in climate that contribute to floods, droughts, famine, and war (AMS, 2012; Andereeg, 2010; Doran & Zimmerman, 2009; IPCC, 2007, 2013; Oreskes, 2004). Given current conditions of social suffering, the increasing impact of climate change contributing to even greater widespread harm exacerbated by COVID-19, current education models need to be rethought, and their effectiveness evaluated in order to truly address the pressing issues of social justice and sustainability. Such matters have become life or death.

As the past decades of educational trends in EE and the impending crises we face in the next half-century clearly demonstrate, a refusal to understand and embrace mutuality and interdependence is woven throughout the interconnected hardships of social suffering and environmental degradation. This refusal is embedded in a con-
ceptual framework based on a system of exploitation and violence—a lens that serves as the dominant, shaping force regarding what it means to be an educator. I assert that a dominant *egotistical* approach—or a form of teacher as a leader focused on the individual or self-development of students—must be examined and critiqued for its limitations in favor of efforts toward an *ecotistical* approach focused on the health and well-being of a broader ecological community and the interdependency and internationality of students as bodies of water, communities of bacteria, living breathing ecosystems within larger ecosystems. In confronting this stark contrast, I emphasize that as critical environmental educators, and especially as teachers in most school settings, we have a responsibility to examine and address how it is school cultures create, support, and sustain the extreme violence of social suffering and environmental degradation in the era now being called the Anthropocene. When EE scholar-activists are faced with such challenges, I reiterate that we must be willing to inquire into the ways that current forms of exploitation are rationalized, justified, and/or ignored.

**Ecocritical Pedagogies in the Twenty-First Century**

Central to an ecocritical framework is the importance of recognizing the differences between ecological cultures and intelligences and dominant human supremacist and individual-centered cultures. An ecocritical educational framework can be characterized as the examination and analysis of the ways in which culture, language, and the associated values and beliefs shape our thinking and contribute to injustice; as well as, our abilities and responsibilities to confront assumptions that underscore social suffering and environmental degradation. Such efforts require explicit attention to understanding diversity and the eco-social structural relationships between language, culture, and education that define how we recognize and understand difference. I draw from Weintraub et al.’s (2006) introduction of the term *eco-tistical* in response to a lack of terminology in the English language that describes “humans relating to the nonhuman environment in a harmonious, respectful, and pragmatic manner” (p. 55). By switching *ego-* to *eco-*, she intended to direct “focus away from self and toward home or habitat” in response to the absence of any opposite terminology for anthropocentric—the privileging of humanity—and egocentric—the privileging of self (Weintraub et al., 2006). In this sense, the term *ecocentric* is an adjective for ecological consciousness, or what Martusewicz and Edmundson (2005) propose as an “eco-ethical consciousness” (p. 73) that takes into consideration the social and environmental impact of decision-making and recognizes them as inextricably linked.

The primary emphasis of a growing body of scholarship identifying as ecocritical is a recognition of the limitations of how we understand and situate ourselves—humans—as a species that exists separate from and superior to all other forms of living and nonliving beings. Within that growing body of literature, scholars are increasingly using the phrase “more-than-human” (Abram, 1996, 1999) to draw
attention to the larger set of ecological relationships that exist beyond those that imply merely humans in relationship with other humans. Thus, henceforth in this chapter, I use the term more-than-human to refer to plants, animals, streams, forests, soil, rocks, and so on to emphasize the existence of webs of connections that do not necessarily even include the human as a reference point. When addressing the injustices perpetuated by the conviction of human supremacy on and within the planet, ecocritical scholarship identifies the important role that schools, and more specifically educators and educational leaders, play in reproducing and reinforcing the root assumptions informing this belief. Therefore, an ecocritical framework is explicitly designed to interrupt and (re)constitute Western industrial assumptions that inform and structure how educators teach, and how this teaching shapes students’ understanding of their human existence in relation to each other and, more specifically, to the living systems to which they belong.

As an ecocritical educator working to facilitate and encourage a change in mindsets for educators, I focus on anthropocentrism—or human-centered thinking. Anthropocentrism is the conviction that human beings are superior to other forms of life/matter and that human wants and needs supersede that of everything else. Importantly, I do not make the argument that anthropocentrism should take priority over other dominant discourses constructing Western industrial culture, such as patriarchy, racism, ableism, classism, and so forth. Rather, I assert that if a critique of anthropocentrism is too often not included in the critical examination of how we think as teachers, then it is likely we will continue to fail to address the deep habits of mind upon which many social justice issues are predicated. Our thoughts and actions all exist in complex relationships to one another, and our environments and the diverse relationships within them constitute and mediate how we construct meaning as a culture.

An important premise of an ecocritical framework is that the human-supremacist worldview is a cultural construct. In other words, this stance asserts that we, as humans—specifically those of us constituted by and constituting dominant Western industrial culture—have learned to think and behave according to culturally constructed, relational ways of understanding, and we use this understanding to interpret relationships and thus create meaning. Given the nature of meaning as culturally constructed, an ecocritical framework focuses on the ways in which meaning can be constructed in a manner that is supportive of the health and well-being of the entire community. Our cultural constructions can be interrupted and shifted when we learn to think differently about our relationships to each other and to the natural world. Thus, recognizing an anthropocentric worldview is an important entry point for rethinking human centrism and the role of educators to further teach toward (un)learning the injustice and pervasive violence of Western industrial culture.

An essential role of educators and researchers in EE committed to ecotistical pedagogies is to recognize and value teaching and learning that does not explicitly perpetuate human supremacy, and in so doing, work to identify and revalue the critical practices of valuing diversity, mutual aid, and interdependence that still exist in communities all over the world. To help explain this work, I draw from an image that compares a human-centered worldview to an ecological worldview.
Focusing on Fig. 1.1, I emphasize the need to engage in recognizing an anthropocentric worldview—that is, one that takes humans as the reference point of superior to everything earthly—and how that worldview is culturally constituted and maintained. In the context of schools, educators and educational leaders can play a vital role in challenging this egocentric worldview that reflects our culture’s anthropocentrism. EE researchers and educators have the ability—and arguably, the social and ethical responsibility—to partake in preparing a kind of global citizenry where diverse communities of humans both understand the need for and potential of (re)constituting this problematic and currently dominant worldview in favor of those more supportive of social justice and sustainability—such as an ecotistical worldview (pictured in Fig. 1.2).

Examining and discussing Figs. 1.1 and 1.2 provides an opportunity for dialogue about the ways in which worldviews can support or conflict with our educational efforts to address the challenges of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. As EE educators and educational leaders engage in a critique of anthropocentrism, there is the opportunity to develop the capability to cultivate habits of mind which support and sustain all species, not just humans. These habits of mind help to challenge

![Egotistical Worldview](image)

**Fig. 1.1** Egotistical Worldview adapted from “Differing Worldviews” (Martusewicz et al., 2015, p. 11). This figure illustrates the socially constructed hierarchical worldview of Western industrial culture. This illustration has appeared on a variety of social media networks and blogs—most notably the organization Generation Alpha. The Ego vs. Eco image—having made its way around through blogs, brochures, t-shirts, and posters—illustrates two fundamentally different worldviews. Adapting the Internet meme “Ego vs. Eco,” Figure depicts an Egotistical worldview.
destructive assumptions and practices promoted by anthropocentric egotistical leadership—a leadership approach that is all too prevalent and which often dominates school, family, and community politics. Recognizing the ways in which language influences culture and the ways in which culture influences language is essential as we conceptualize and implement changes to what could and ought to be truly inclusive communities. Thus, language plays an important role in how we interpret and examine the relationship between these two differing, and often conflicting, worldviews. For instance, EE conceptualized through an ecocritical framework challenges the prominence of dualistic and binary thinking in Western industrial culture. This process includes analyzing hierarchized superior/inferior dualisms in order to identify how such dualistic thinking works to uphold and perpetuate a problematic value-hierarchy that frames our understanding of our relationships with one another, ourselves, and the more-than-human communities to which we all belong.

Plumwood (2002) illustrates how in Western industrial cultures humans overwhelmingly understand relationality through sets of value-hierarchized dualisms. This thinking not only justifies and perpetuates anthropocentrism (human/nature), it also upholds forms of oppression such as racism (White/Person of Color), classism (Wealthy/poor), sexism (Male/female), ableism (Typical/atypical), and so on. All of
these forms of oppression rely on value-hierarchized dualisms that inform how we understand and interact with one another.

To help explain how this applies to educational leaders learning to recognize sets of superior/inferior dualisms, I offer an example from my practice. The following is a list of some of the dualisms I use while working with teachers and educational leaders to address the logic structure of leadership in Western industrial culture. This list includes but is not limited to:

- Superior/inferior
- Central /marginalized
- Human/nature,
- Man/woman
- Masculine/feminine
- Reason/emotion
- Mind/body
- Wealthy/poor
- White/Person of Color
- Civilized/savage.
- Master /slave.
- Employer/ employee
- Teacher/student
- Adult/child

As we look at this list together, I ask educational leaders to stack some of the value-hierarchized dualisms together with superior/inferior and central/marginalized and then to work as a group to visually illustrate how these dualisms work within Western industrial culture to set up what is often referred to as the norm or the standard. Afterward, we highlight how these dualisms discipline our relationships, with an emphasis on the fact that while these dualisms inform how we think and act, it is important to remain mindful that “A map is not the territory it represents, but, if correct, it has a similar structure to the territory, which accounts for its usefulness” (Korzybski, 1933/1994, p. 58). Specifically focused on identifying and unsettling notions of superiority, we use this opportunity to examine how these hierarchized-dualisms combine to support exploitation and domination of others through our leadership and, conversely, how de(re)constructing them offers potentials for alternatives in how we lead.

To better understand the importance of de(re)constructing these dualisms, it is necessary to recognize how the terms and subject positions in the first column—which name those that are most highly valued within Western industrial culture—clearly illustrate how, for example, subject positions of wealthy individuals are considered more valuable than those in the second column, the poor. The high value and privilege afforded those in the first column are ascribed via a cultural logic structure that prioritizes and values them at the expense of those in the opposite column. This list illustrates how such dualisms combine for those identified as being the subject position within the left-hand column to reinforce and legitimize power over and control of those identified as subject positions in the column on the right.
Although such hierarchies are examined through critical pedagogies in teacher education and critical EE scholarship, the direct relationship of Human/nature to the other dualisms depicted in the list is a vital facet of this logic that is often overlooked. Pedagogically, I aim for these provocative placements, and specifically, listing them to illustrate how these value-hierarchized dualism function together, to encourage educators and researchers to critically and ethically question the fundamental assumptions in Western industrial culture about relationships when considering the work they set out to do and the support they intend to provide. I also intentionally use this list and the described process of drawing attention to the value-hierarchized dualisms and the connections between them to facilitate an understanding of the nature of these value hierarchies as intersectional. Further, I strive to cultivate an understanding of the ways in which these dualisms function—while acknowledging that they are not universally experienced—to expose the inequitable construction of what is often valued and rewarded as “normal” in Western industrial culture and which has manifested in an egotistical very male-centered, White, human supremacist leadership.

**What Can We Do? Teaching Towards an Ecotistical Pedagogies in Education**

With roots in critical pedagogy (Darder, 2016; Freire, 1993; Hooks, 1994; McLaren, 2006) and ecocritical pedagogical frameworks (Lupinacci, Happel-Parkins, & Turner, 2018; Bowers, 1993; Gruenewald, 2003; Furman & Gruenewald, 2004; Kahn, 2010), this work strives to identify and confront deep cultural assumptions informing worldviews in efforts to support educational leadership for social justice and sustainability. When we are faced with these commitments and the recognition that they are interrelated, it is important to recognize that our cultures play a significant role in how we think and act. It is from such a socio-linguistic and postmodernist position that educational leaders must learn to examine how and why we—as scholar-practitioners—think and act the ways we do. Accordingly, in educational leadership programs, students must learn to see the critical connections between empirical, social, and behavioral research and that they recognize their role as cultural workers in their communities (Freire, 1998).

As many issues of inequality and unjust suffering are embedded within educational structures that maintain and reproduce the unjust sociological phenomena of Western industrial culture, I strive to uphold the expectation that my teaching foster community-based learning that is rigorous, relevant, and builds strong community relationships. To support the development of ecotistical pedagogies in any community, teachers and educational leaders must become cultural workers, respected and disciplined researchers, effective and engaging speakers, and must both talk-the-talk and walk-the-walk.
Drawing from a diverse set of pedagogical frameworks rooted in critical theory, there is a strong connection between the conceptual framework and a commitment to the self-reflective process of sharing diverse understandings of what it means for a program to be committed to social justice and sustainability. With strong attention to the inextricable relationship between social justice and sustainability, this version of EE strives to recognize a that twenty-first-century challenges of social justice and sustainability require a strong commitment to understanding and interrupting the complex relationships that constitute, and are constituted by, dominant discourses and discursive practices of Western industrial culture in schools and society. Furthermore, it is essential that such interruptions be intricately and intimately intertwined with our own work in relationship to the tasks we ask of our students and future students.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, the more that teachers, researchers, and educational leaders in EE engage in what this chapter proposes as an ongoing and necessary (re)constituting of EE and teacher education working together with indigenous educators and radical EE scholar-activists to continue to critically address anthropocentrism while moving toward the development and maintaining of an ecotistical pedagogical focus in EE; the more potential there will be for educational experiences in schools and communities for EE educators, researchers, and other leaders to foster spaces where teachers and students learn together to recognize the tendency of the privileged to dismiss what they would rather not confront. It is important to note that there are plenty of egotistical folks who for good reason ought to be admired and valued, and who are firm supporters of a shared commitment to respond to the undeniable atrocities that we—as humans—enact on one another. However, none of these atrocities occur in isolation and no solution or political (r)evolution will come from an egotistical authority. In confronting human supremacy and the egotism beholden to Western industrial culture’s version of teaching and learning, it is paramount that critical EE leaders work as allies to all those suffering while challenging and confronting the systemic roots of oppression on all our respective fronts. In other words, we all have a responsibility—many of us as privileged members of society—to support those suffering unjustly in whatever capacity we can. As leaders striving toward an ecotistical society, we ought to be looking for any and all opportunities to decentralize power from individuals and facilitate a redistribution of power based on multispecies justice and equity.

(Re)constituting EE toward a focus on diverse ecotistical pedagogies requires EE educators, and researchers, in Western industrial culture to stop asserting leadership or authority in an egotistical manner, to turn attention toward the difficult necessity for shifting worldviews, and to committing to a cultural change that will mean giving up the power and privilege afforded to some at the cost of others and the environment. As EE researchers who identify as nonauthoritarian scholar-activist
educators deeply embedded in Western industrial culture, for many of us this means learning to listen and practicing humility while trusting that if we, enactors of dominant Western industrial culture, do not (re)constitute the cultural framework by which dominant meanings are socially constructed, then we are destined to recreate many of the problematic relationships that we, as radical educators, often set out to change. I end this chapter with a list of suggestions aimed toward supporting and addressing the pervasive egotistical logics in education and turning our efforts toward more ecotistical projects.

• Engage in learning from the diverse projects in our human and more-than-human communities and commit to rethinking the dominant assumptions influencing how we, as humans, construct meaning and thus how we learn to relate to each other and the more-than-human world. Further, make the commitment to critically and ethically examine how we understand educating, organizing, and taking action toward supporting healthy communities that include all beings and the intrinsic value of recognizing, respecting, and representing the right of all beings to belong to and live in peace within healthy ecological system.

• Engage in critical and ethical examinations of what it means to be an educator, researcher, leader, etc. As notions of such are all too often defined in terms of human-centered egotism, it is important to work to (re)constitute these roles and responsibilities in terms of what and how an ecotistical pedagogy might facilitate as practice, and how those often competing but coexisting worldviews contribute to our actions either supporting or undermining the rights of all beings, including future generations, to coexist in peace.

• Engage in examining EE in terms of ecological systems and the diverse ways in which our living relationships can be recognized, respected, and represented through teaching and learning among all members. Specifically, engage in recognizing the role of activist networks in modeling diverse examples of how an ecotistical approach to leadership plays a role in alleviating and eliminating unjust suffering in our communities. In doing so work to recognize such resistance in diverse species. Powerfully strong examples in the United States can be found in human communities in the #Blacklivesmatter and Idle No More movements, as well as in more mainstream political movements like the Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez’s campaign platform for a political revolution of the US government, or the Spore Liberation Front, which recognizes the importance and power of mycelial networks. In all cases, build networks of solidarity with these organizations. Furthermore, ask leaders in these movements about their visions and plans for education that supports social justice and sustainability.

• Engage in supporting the diverse approaches to leading and healing from Western industrial culture and in solidarity show respect for epistemologies that differ from the current dominant way of way of understanding and organizing learning. Support the ways in which diverse forms of resistance work to challenge and break the will of their oppressors and as leaders support this resistance even when it means giving up privilege and power.
Engage in strong alliance with all those suffering and support the oppressed in solidarity while simultaneously working to shift and challenge the dominant systems that often perpetuate the suffering of marginalized and subjugated beings. In all cases as leaders show up, speak out, and take action to stop the systemic domination of one another, ourselves, and our more-than-human kin.

In such volatile and authoritarian times, it is important that ecocritical educators learn to work together to challenge dominant perceptions of what currently constitutes EE and work to (re)constitute an EE teaching and learning that takes serious social justice and sustainability. Efforts toward a political (r)evolution in education can begin by focusing on the importance of convivial EE networks—rather than on individual advancement. Through fostering the development of networks of scholar-activist educators studying and researching twenty-first-century challenges that include ecocritical dialogue, we can resist the overwhelming egotism and anthropocentrism in Western industrial culture and reject the illusion that as humans we are separate from and superior to each other and all other beings on the planet. We challenge egotism and anthropocentrism when we build solidarity in addressing common dilemmas in our communities with other ecotistical humans and especially when we teach one another to make choices to include in our educational networks more-than-humans—be they animals, mountains, trees, a river, the salmon that swim upstream to spawn, the large winged osprey that visits the lakes where we swim and cool off on a hot summer’s day, the food that we grow, or the vast networks of mycelium in the soil. It matters mostly, in this sense, that we work away from understanding ourselves as independent individuals toward the kind of ecotistical understanding of self as interrelated and interdependent on the diverse living systems to which we belong. The point is that we learn a deep respect for difference and our shared dependencies when we understand in an ecological sense what it means to be ecotistical leaders—to recognize and value that we are in relationship with a diversity of wonderful beings and that we owe our existence to these devoted networks. From such relationships, we learn what it means to teach and lead by belonging and without framing that understanding within anthropocentrism; rather, belonging and respect become guiding EE principles that we enact in our everyday lives as ecotistical educators, researchers, and leaders. It is through these convivial and mutually sustaining relationships that we learn to overcome the isolating ills of Western industrial culture and our habits of egotism, and we are called to action with our diverse sisters and brothers to teach and lead in support of living systems. We practice ecotistical pedagogies.

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