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Psychosocial Theories of Development: Socializing Future Educators in Modernity

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PSYCHOSOCIAL THEORIES OF DEVELOPMENT:
SOCIALIZING FUTURE EDUCATORS
IN MODERNITY

by

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PSYCHOSOCIAL THEORIES OF DEVELOPMENT: 
SOCIALIZING FUTURE EDUCATORS 
IN MODERNITY

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Western Michigan University, 2005

The purpose of this paper is to illuminate the implicit curriculum of high-profile theories of identity and moral development as commonly found in collegiate-level educational psychology texts. My primary concern is the manner in which Erik Erikson’s and Lawrence Kohlberg’s theories of development implicitly convey modernistic frames of mind of the autonomous individual at a level that goes unnoticed. The manner in which the implicit curriculum socializes future educators to adopt the autonomous individual frame of mind is problematic for our natural world.

The aims of this paper are significant because they illuminate the notion of the autonomous individual as a culturally constructed world view of the modern age that advances ecologically unsustainable practices due in large part to its distancing frame of mind. Thus, as high-profile theories of development are reinforced in teacher preparatory programs to teach identity and moral development, there is an inadvertent, multifaceted side effect. This side effect being the implicit conveyance of taken-for-granted modernistic assumptions that shape aspiring teachers’ frames of mind to think about and perceive human development in terms of the rational, autonomous, and morally self-directing individual. It is primarily this frame of mind that perpetuates ecologically destructive behaviors on the part of human beings toward our natural world.
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Jennifer Jill Niedzielski
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Chapter One: Introduction

The culture in which we live socializes us to perceive things in ways the culture dictates; thus the culture that surrounds us, creates us. It influences our perceptions, our mindsets, and our realities, and to a certain extent, dictates our actions and thoughts. Thus "culture can be understood as the shared patterns that set the ‘tone, character, and quality’ of people’s lives" (Bowers, 1993, p. 21). As our culture socializes us to the norms it demands, we adopt a specific view of ourselves, our identities, and our moral obligations within that cultural framework. Understanding that "whether a person is agreeable, trusting, sympathetic, and cooperative or cynical, callous, and antagonistic appears to be more influenced by early environment than by genes" (Spretnek, 1993, p. 218), who we become is more dependent upon our cultural indoctrination than our genetics. And since our culture is such an integral part of our creation of self and our identities, it becomes unnatural to question the ways it shapes the world views we acquire that in turn shape how we experience the world. Thus, these cultural patterns are "largely invisible yet always present sources of authority in people’s lives" (Bowers, 1993, p. 21). In fact, “most of our culture is learned and reenacted at a taken for granted level” (Bowers, 1997, p. 23), and when this occurs, we unknowingly perpetuate habits of mind that are problematic for both humanity and the natural world.

"The culture that provides the patterns guiding human experience can be partly understood at the explicit level of awareness and changed as a result of thought . . ." (Bowers, 1993, p. 21). And I believe that "discussions about worldviews can reveal, at least partially, taken-for-granted assumptions that may strongly influence our relations with one another and the world around us" (Smith, 1992, p. 20). Certain habits of mind created by our Western culture deserve to be made explicit and questioned. Being able to see the roots of our societal
problems that arise as a result of the mindsets we unconsciously cultivate, we become empowered to change the way we live. Even though we are "essentially a product of [an] industrial society, educated with the sort of blinders that every culture employs in order to perpetuate itself" (Norberg-Hodge, 1991, p. 2), we have the ability to understand that the irreversible destruction we are causing to our Earth is a result of our modernistic world view, one that once recognized, can be changed and recreated in order to create ecologically responsible behaviors. In order for humans to recognize that their frames of mind-- i.e., the way they view the world is influenced by cultural factors-- they need to understand that "humans are nested in cultural systems, and cultural systems are nested in natural systems" (Bowers, 1997, p. viii). Essentially, in order for us to cease reinforcing modernistic mindsets that are problematic for the natural world, humans need to be cognizant of the fact that their frames of mind are created by cultural influences that do little to respect the environment.

What is currently lacking in our Western mindset is our ability to see that our culture can provide the vital connection between humans and the natural world and that humans are connected to the Earth. As our current cultural values reinforce a sense of self and identity that encourages a separation from the natural world, we lose sight of the fact that humans are a part of a cultural system that is nested in natural systems. We define our identities and moral responsibilities around the notion that we are separate from and dominant over the Earthly system. As we adopt this frame of mind, we lose sight of the fact that as we define ourselves as separate from the natural world, we engage in a process of unlimited consumption and depletion of natural resources at a rate that simply can not be sustained.

Thus, it is essential that we come to terms with frames of mind that encourage an unsustainable way of being in the world. We need to begin to understand the ways in which our
culture currently reinforces an autonomous individualistic frame of mind that further encourages the detachment of humans from their natural world. One primary aim of this paper is to examine the methods in which our culture goes about emphasizing a mindset of autonomous individuality, a mindset that advances the detachment of self from community and nature. As I continue with this goal in mind, I find myself drawn to thinking about the institutions within our culture that perpetuate cultural ways of knowing, and I immediately think of our systems of education, both K-12 and collegiate level alike. Because education "plays a critical role in the dissemination of an interpretation of reality unique to our own era" (Smith, 1992, p. 19), I believe this arena to be of value to investigate. If we are to foster a sustainable relationship with the natural world and not continue to undermine our resource base at an unsustainable level, we need to be keenly attentive to the unconscious, hence implicit messages our current system of education unknowingly encourage that are modernistic in origin.

This thesis will explore one way collegiate-level institutions prepare aspiring teachers for understanding human development and the ways that the curricular content-- i.e., high-profile theories of psychosocial development contribute to the cultural socialization of future educators. The purpose of this paper is to examine high-profile "stage" theories of identity and moral development found in college-level educational psychology texts for implicit modernistic messages that perpetuate culturally influenced habits of mind of autonomous individualism. I am primarily concerned with the implicit curriculum of such theories and the taken-for-granted assumptions that are unconsciously shaping our future teachers' frames of mind. Educational psychology texts present "high-profile" theories of development in ways that shape how future teachers perceive the "true" way an individual develops both personally
and morally within our society—high-profile being the most visible and privileged theories as commonly utilized in most educational psychology texts. The implicit curriculum of these theories socialize our teachers to believe that identity and moral development occur in distinct stages, all the while encouraging the notion of individual rational thought at each stage of one’s development.

This paper aims to look closely at what aspiring teachers are reading and studying in terms of identity and moral development of an individual. This paper is not necessarily concerned with an analysis of these high-profile theories of identity and moral development for their educational merit or validity. Rather, I am primarily concerned with the implicit cultural learnings that are transmitted to aspiring teachers unconsciously through the study of such theories. Also, I am concerned with the abstract ideas and language used by such theories that transmit cultural ways of knowing. That said, it is to be made evident that these theories found in current educational psychology texts represent secondary, not primary material. For example, when aspiring teachers read about Erik Erikson’s theory of identity development and Lawrence Kohlberg’s theory of moral development, they are reading a secondary source, not Erikson’s or Kohlberg’s primary work. This aspect is important to acknowledge because as I look at the language used by educational psychology text authors to illuminate taken-for-granted cultural assumptions, it is important to be mindful that the authors of these texts have interpreted Erikson’s and Kohlberg’s primary work with their own culturally influenced frames of mind.

It is the purpose of this paper to demonstrate how the implicit curriculum of high-profile theories of identity development influence the mature members of our society, primarily teachers, to think about the developing identities and moral responsibilities of human beings as
autonomous individuals that engage in a non-participatory relationship with the social and environmental communities. As teachers assume these taken-for-granted assumptions, they unknowingly further individualistic behaviors not only in themselves, but in their students as well. As students perceive themselves as being autonomous individuals, they in turn adopt implicit cultural assumptions that are inherently modernistic and act accordingly. This is the double bind we now face. As high-profile theories of development are reinforced in teacher preparatory programs to teach identity and moral development, there is an inadvertent side effect. The side effect is the implicit conveyance of taken-for-granted cultural assumptions that are modernistic in origin that in turn exacerbate ecologically destructive behaviors. The more we reinforce these high-profile theories, in effect the more we perpetuate cultural ways of knowing that are harmful to the natural world.

Cultural Influences

In our North American culture, being an individual means that one possess unique qualities that distinguish one from another where one’s whims, wishes, and wants are unique to that person. Uniqueness, independence, and individuality are prided as being hallmarks of a self-sufficient, successful person in our modern world. As our culture honors this way of being, we tend to forget that as humans, we are more similar than we are different. Thus, we neglect to understand that in our sameness, we are connected. In the Western world, values of “sameness, similarity, and likeness” tend to be discouraged. Our modern culture views “connections” and relationships in a negative light because it is believed that these values infringe upon one’s right and freedom to be self-directing and in control of their world. Because of the frames of minds our culture creates, most individuals come to view the natural world as a repository of resources for human consumption and individual material gain. These
same habits of mind encourage us to think that “we as a species can liberate ourselves from restraints imposed by nature and that our domination of the physical world diminishes our need to rely on one another to attain satisfactory levels of personal security” (Smith, 1992, p. 19). As we embrace the belief that we are autonomous individuals, free to be self-directing, we rely less and less on our connection to each other and the natural world. This disconnect sets the stage for ecologically destructive behaviors.

It is the purpose of this paper to show that the frame of mind of the autonomous individual to be a culturally constructed worldview of the modern age that contributes to ecologically unsustainable practices due in large part to its distancing frame of mind. With this sense of distance and separation, humans in turn feel isolated from the natural world, thus they mistreat it. This is a problem of grand magnitude. If our society continues to embrace the idealization of the individual, we put ourselves into a serious double bind. That double bind being the utilization of high-profile theories to teach development which in turn inadvertently convey taken-for-granted cultural assumptions that foster a frame of mind that proceeds ecological disarray.

Chapter Overview

In chapter two, “Modernization,” I delineate the historical roots of modernity, its characteristics, and its cultural orientation. The aim of this chapter is to establish a framework in which to understand how the modernistic movement has shaped our culture’s world view of the role of the individual and psychosocial development in our society. The work of Stephen Toulmin (1990), Morris Berman (1981), C.A. Bowers (1993, 1997), Helena Norberg-Hodge (1991), and David Orr (2004) provide a conceptual
framework in which to view the implicit curriculum of high-profile theories of identity and moral development for their inherently modernistic principles.

Chapter three, “High-Profile Theories of Identity and Moral Development,” brings to the foreground theories of Erik Erikson, James Marcia, and Lawrence Kohlberg in order to examine the implicit curriculum for modernistic origins. Erikson’s eight stages of psychosocial identity development represent major crises that have their roots in the demands of society and that the individual experiences over the course of their life. According to Erikson, each crisis is a turning point on a continuum where in which an individual chooses to resolve developmental dilemmas. James Marcia further identifies four identity statuses that represent certain degrees of commitments made by adolescents during the fifth stage, “Identity vs. Role Confusion” of Erikson’s theory.

The work of Lawrence Kohlberg focuses on the development of individuals and the ways in which they develop a sense of justice and right verses wrong. Similar to Erikson’s “stage” theory of identity development, Kohlberg also asserts that humans develop their moral sensibility in stages. Erikson, Marcia, and Kohlberg all present theories of psychosocial development that represent sequencing of stages and a linear progression of finding one’s self within a cultural context.

Chapter four, “The Implicit Curriculum of Psychosocial Theories of Development,” shows how modernistic values are embedded within Erikson’s and Marcia’s theories of identity development and Kohlberg’s theory of moral development. In this chapter, I illuminate the implicit modernistic assumptions and the autonomous individual frame of mind these theories support. This chapter addresses the concern that when theories of development unknowingly promote the modernistic mindset of the
autonomous individual, they also demote or devalue habits of mind that represent an ecologically sustainable, wholistic world view.

After exploring the implicit curriculum embedded within these theories, chapter five, "Ecological Consequences of a Problematic Double Bind," brings into high relief the problematic double bind that is created as a result of perpetuating the autonomous individual frame of mind through the implicit curriculum. It is the aim of this chapter to illuminate the ways in which future teachers are being socialized to function in the world with culturally influenced frames of mind that encourage attitudes of separation, isolation, individualism, and anthropocentricism. This chapter concludes the thesis by focusing on the double bind we now face-- the reliance upon using high-profile theories to teach identity and moral development and how these theories inadvertently convey implicit cultural assumptions that do little to respect the natural world.
Chapter Two: Modernity: Historical Roots and Principle Characteristics

In the words of Toulmin (1990), "modernity is the inexhaustible cornucopia of novelty" (p. 5). The 17th century was a time in our Western history when great innovations were taking place. During this time, the age of modernity had begun, and all were enticed by its promises of a better world for human beings. As humanity "set aside all doubts and ambiguities about its capacity to achieve its goals here on Earth," a modern mindset was born (Toulmin, 1990, p. ix). It was a revolution of sorts, a revolution that enticed its followers with promises of major advances in science and social thought based upon human powers of rational thought and logical reasoning. People were excited about the prospects of an easier, more comfortable life with the new technological advances. This modern world was considered "innovative" and "progressive," and it was at this point in history that humans began to distinguish themselves from the previous era. In their eyes, the pre-modern era of thought was primitive, archaic, and ancient. For this new modern society was enthralled with the optimism of science and technology in explaining all elements of the natural world in rational and mechanical terms. Therefore they no longer relied upon the pre-modern era of experience that was explained by the mysteriously divine.

As the modern age came to rely upon scientific inquiry to explain all things, two tools were used for such investigation: rationalism and empiricism. Renee Descartes viewed the universe as a "vast machine wound up by God to tick forever," (p.34) and he believed reason and rational thought to be the best guide for our human beliefs and actions. Descartes espoused the belief that "it is no use collecting data or examining nature straight off... there will time enough for that once we learn how to think
correctly” (Berman, 1994, p. 32). It was with this notion that Descartes asserted that by employing rational thought, i.e. “clear thinking,” we could understand all the workings of the natural world. Rationalism is the belief that we can have knowledge without experience. Descartes focused on knowledge that we can know for certain without relying upon tradition or our senses, i.e., experiences. The only thing that Descartes believed we could trust to bring about knowledge was our reasoning. He believed reason could be relied upon to guide us to see what was true and what was not true, and relying solely upon our experiences to bring about knowledge was not necessary. He believed that the laws of our thoughts conformed to the laws of things (Berman, 1994, p. 28). For Descartes, before the examination of data could occur, we first must be able to think correctly and rational thought provided this “correct” line of thinking.

Bacon on the other hand, embraced the idea of empiricism. Empirical thought was based upon objective observation. Empiricism is the belief that the best way to be certain of something is to test it with actual experience. Bacon believed that knowledge was based upon what we could observe and test, and he relied upon scientific experimentation to explain all things. He believed that the collection of “hard data accumulated through the experimental testing of nature” yielded the ability to make generalizations from them (Berman, 1994, p. 29). For Bacon it was the analysis of physical reality that produced knowledge, and he saw the “foundations of knowledge in sense data, experiment, and the mechanical arts . . .”. Descartes on the other hand saw “only confusion in such subjects and [found] clarity in the operations of the mind alone” (Berman, 1994, p. 33). Putting together the two tools of scientific inquiry, Descartes’ rationalism provides for Bacon’s
objective empiricism a framework that enables the “manipulation of the environment to take place with some sort of logical regularity” (Berman, 1994, p. 34).

As humans began to see nature in light of rationalism and empiricism, a shift in perspective on how humans viewed the world occurred. Humans became consumed with understanding “how” things worked as opposed to the pre-modern era that primarily questioned “why” things worked. “The identification of human existence with pure ratiocination, the idea that man can know all there is to know by way of his reason” was a hallmark of the new modern era (Berman, 1994, p. 34). Once the modern age embraced this notion of human reasoning, the new and improved modern mind regarded the thinking of previous ages as misguided and erroneous. It was believed that “the men and women of those times thought they understood nature, but without our scientific sophistication their beliefs could not help but be childish and animistic” (Berman, 1994, p. 70). The people of the modern age were convinced that superstition and confused thinking about the world were a thing of the past.

As the 1600-1700’s was associated with the birth of the modern world view, it was around 1680 that the inception of Isaac Newton’s notion of “modern science” and Renee Descartes’ notion of “modern philosophy” occurred. With the inception of these two modern views, thought adhered to strict rationality, and the quest for certainty was born. These men “committed the modern world to thinking about nature in a new and ‘scientific’ way, and to use more ‘rational’ methods to deal with the problems of human life and society” (Toulmin, 1990, p. 9). Pure thinking was defined with scientific thought and mathematical reasoning. These two modes of thought established a precedence for the modern age. The goal of Newton’s modern science was explaining the “how” of
things instead of understanding the "why." Newton focused on measurement, observation, and prediction to guide thought. As Newton focused on these elements, there was little concern for explaining the "why" because he believed that if phenomena is not measurable or able to be observed, "it has no place in experimental philosophy" (Berman, 1990, p. 43). On the other hand, Descartes' notion of rational thought pervaded all areas of thinking in response to the natural world; "without having a method of clear thinking which we can apply, mechanically and rigorously, to every phenomenon we wish to study, our examination of nature will of necessity be faulty" (Berman, 1981, p. 32). According to these founding fathers of the modern age, human beings have the power within their minds in which to objectively, mechanically confront all elements of the natural world. In doing so, humans began to separate themselves from such objects of study, i.e. the natural world. It was only in separating oneself from that which was being studied that one could truly understand and manipulate it. According to Berman (1981):

In the course of the seventeenth century, Western Europe hammered out a new way of perceiving reality. The most important change was the shift from quality to quantity, from "why" to "how." The universe, once seen as alive, possessing its own goals and purposes, is now a collection of inert matter, hurrying around endlessly and meaninglessly. (p. 45)

Understanding the basic inception of the modern era, one begins to come to terms with a primary result of modernity. One primary principle of the modern era rests on the notion that human beings are to distance themselves from that which is being studied in order to fully comprehend and understand it in rational terms. Conducting this method of investigation, humans were to develop a "non-participatory consciousness" where in which one denies the recognition of one's resemblance with the natural world. Denying one's likeness with the natural world allowed one to study it objectively. Viewing the
world from this standpoint, knowledge is acquired by recognizing the distance between self and nature (Berman, 1981, p. 70). Thus, "reason becomes the essence of personality, and is characterized by distancing oneself from phenomena, maintaining one's identity" (Berman, 1994, p. 72). Embracing this model, knowledge in the Western world was obtained by the very act of one distancing oneself from the experience of study. Detaching oneself from the subject of study at hand allowed for complete understanding. In doing this, problems and dilemmas of the natural world could be solved free of prejudice. But "adopting a position of detached objectivity in an attempt to master nature, we have tended to forget our fundamental connection to the world we observe" (Smith, 1992, p.26). As we forget our fundamental connection, we forget how to value, respect, and treat the natural environment, and we no longer experience or honor its sense of mysticism or divinity.

As the universe became viewed as "a vast machine, wound up by God to tick forever and consisting of two basic entities: matter and motion" (Berman, 1994, p. 34), thinking about the natural world in this way prompted the assumption that the natural world was orderly, systematic, and logical. Human beings embraced this world view of the universe, and they saw it to be humans' duty to study it with rational and logical thought in a detached, objective manner. Understanding nature in this context and the role of human reason, we became focused on the quest of understanding all the workings of the natural world in human terms. According to Toulmin, "for Decartes and his successors, timely questions were no concern of philosophy: instead, their aim was to bring to light permanent structures underlying all the changeable phenomena of Nature" (1990, p. 34). Understanding that the natural world was comprised of "permanent
structures” that can and should be analyzed by the human mind, a world view of
“abstraction” resulted, and humans came to experience the world as composed of
fragmented, discrete, and separable units to be studied in abstraction from their context.

A world view of nature as composed of fragmented, discrete, and separable parts
lead humans to adopt the metaphor of nature as analogous to a machine. It became
accepted that to “know nature, [one must] treat it mechanically” (Berman, 1994, p. 31).
Because nature was seen as functioning like a machine, it could be mastered and
controlled by humans. Smith (1992) notes:

Rather than being viewed as a complex yet unified entity that defied human
comprehension, sharing in the mystery of the divine, the universe came to be seen as
little more than a complicated machine that, with enough testing and examination,
could be clearly described and successfully manipulated. (p.21)

With the inception of this frame of mind, the universe and natural world no longer
maintained an essence of spirituality or divinity. Because of the modern age, instead of
regarding the natural world with awe and reverence, we began to analyze its parts
rationally and scientifically. We believed that doing so would allow us to understand all
the inner workings of the world for the purpose of human control and domination. “The
discovery of meaning was no longer seen as primary; what was sought instead is the
ability to predict and then control” (Smith, 1992, p.24).

The modern age thrived on the notion of humans’ ability to predict and control the
natural world for the purpose of human betterment and advancement. And since it was
believed that the universe was essentially composed of distinct parts that worked together
like a machine, humans could gain a deeper understanding of the whole system by
breaking the system down into its inherent parts. When this world view was accepted by
human beings, what became neglected was the notion that “wholes have properties that
parts do not have; living systems, or Minds, are not reducible to their components; nature is alive” (Berman, 1994, p. 238). This atomistic notion of nature is an underlying principle of the modern age, and it has implications for the ways in which humans view their relationship with nature.

As humans began to alter their perspective about nature in ways that reflected a world view of rational thought and mechanistic undertones, the way in which humans began to understand their role in the web of life lead to a sense of detachment. As Smith (1992) notes:

This alternation of perspective has denied our interrelationship with the world and has lead us to believe that we are capable of transcending the limitations of the physical environment by becoming masters of, rather then participants in, its rhythms, patterns, and uncertainties. (p. 22)

A separation between “man” and “nature” became evident with the new world view. As humans exercised their abilities to think rationally and logically about the universe in order to free themselves from the confines of the natural world, they began to identify themselves as autonomous individuals void of any participatory relationship with the natural world. In order to truly analyze, master, and control the environment, humans had to be able to detach themselves from the object of study. With the onset of modernity, we no longer viewed ourselves as participants in the universe; rather we had become masters of the universe. As Karl Marx observed, “a degree of detachment is essential if we are to reflect and act upon our circumstances” (Smith, 1992, p. 26). As we began to adopt this mindset of detached objectivity as essential to our understanding of the natural world, we began to detach ourselves from each other. As humans became preoccupied with a level of detachment from the social communities as well, they began to focus on individual needs and securities. With this mindset, humans believed that their survival was purely
dependent upon an individual responsibility rather than a collective one, and the individual became understood as the basic social unit of the society.

Human autonomy is a key feature of modernity. As humans view themselves as individuals acting upon the natural world for the betterment of themselves, they become “isolated actors in an economic arena where their worth and support can be determined upon the basis of what they own and the skills they possess” (Smith, 1992, p. 29). This dominant ideology of individualism pervades every aspect of the modern world view. Humans become independent from others and the natural world in order to survive in Western society. As humans became increasingly concerned with their own survival, competition, independence, and autonomy resulted. A detached, disconnected individual mistreats their community and the world around them because they feel no sense of dependency upon it or connection to it. Lacking this sense of urgency to care for the world around them, humans tend to engage in unsustainable relations with the Earth. As Smith states, “adopting a position of detached objectivity in an attempt to master nature, we have tended to forget our fundamental connection to the world we observe” (p. 26).

In this case, survival in a modernistic world depends upon competition with others to have more of the honored skills of that society so to use these skills to facilitate one’s own self-preservation and survival by their ability to have power and control over those who do not embody these modernistic ideals. “Society becomes a lot of free equal individuals related to each other as proprietors of their own capacities and of what they have acquired by their exercise” (Smith, 1997, p.29). Understanding this, a modern society becomes composed of autonomous individuals who have a greater tendency to think primarily of themselves before others.
There are a multitude of environmental implications for a society that encourages an individual frame of mind. Fostering a sense of individualism above interdependence causes humans to see themselves as separate from and in competition with others for the promotion of egocentric betterment of self in the modern world. Humans seek this betterment of self at the cost of a relationship with others and their natural world as they pursue greater material wealth and prosperity. Being in constant pursuit of self-interest does not allow any opportunities for humans to derive their sense of self from more communal, sustainable means, such as from the relationships they have with their community, friends, family, and the natural world. When humans only think of themselves, they further distance and detach themselves from the natural world. This detachment drives the unsustainable practices initiated and implemented by human beings. As humans continue to embody the modernistic mindset of individuality, they neglect to see and understand how their mistreatment of natural resources has disastrous implications for a sustainable future. Rather the detached, autonomous individual views the environment as the “stage upon which individuals act out their subjectively determined scenarios” (Bowers, 1997, p. 182).

As humans have come to develop the modernistic world view that the individual is the basic social unit and that rational thought as applied to a mechanistic universe explains all things, anthropocentricism manifests itself. Bowers (1997) notes:

An anthropocentric view of the world leads to organizing knowledge and constituting values from a human perspective and need. Relationships with the natural world are thus framed variously by instrumental values and rational approaches to problem solving, the stance of the objective observer, and the cultural categories of public and private property. (p. 7)
And as humans in the modern world rely upon being objective, rational, individuals, the human being is placed at the center of all existence. The human perspective becomes the perspective of value, and the universe and the natural world become resources in which to be utilized for human desires. Modesty’s anthropocentric world view encourages one to see nature in terms of its utility. With the onset of the modern age, humans learned to look upon the Earth for what it could do for them and what it could provide for their individual existence and economic prosperity. As humans hold the dominant position in the nature-human relationship, the natural world is exploited in whatever sense humans see fit.

In summary, the era of modernization revolutionized humans’ world view about their nature as human beings, the natural world, and their relationship with it. The assumptions upon which modernity rests supports a world where in which human powers of rational thought are able to demystify the seemingly mystical workings of our universe; mechanical thinking about the natural world became the metaphor for all thinking and understanding in the modern age. As a result of the emergence of modernistic ways of thinking, pre-modern traditions were viewed as primitive and backward, and they were viewed as weak attempts to understand the natural world. Traditions were seen as inhibiting and primitive and “irrelevant to a modern, experimentally oriented culture” (Bowers, 1997, p.7). The modernistic world view encourages the autonomous individual to be the basic social unit of society where in which the “individual’s rational process, when properly informed, is the ultimate basis of authority” (Bowers, 1997,p. 7). Also, an anthropocentric notion that humans were the center of the mechanical universe was adopted and framed how humans viewed their
relationship with nature. Anthropocentric thinking positioned nature as purely being valued for its use in terms of human needs and desires. As the modern age persuaded autonomous individuals to think objectively about a mechanical universe, humans quickly positioned themselves as distant from and hierarchically situated above nature.

As humans adopted this independent, distant frame of mind, they unknowingly engaged in a problematic relationship with the natural world. Feeling distant from and dominant over the environment, they began to misuse and mistreat it as they objectively analyzed its component parts for deeper, rationally grounded understandings. The modernistic values of individualism, autonomy, rationality, and objective analysis have come to culturally influence our frame of mind, and they are important to illuminate as I turn my attention to examining high-profile theories of psychosocial development. For it is within the implicit curriculum of these theories that taken-for-granted cultural assumptions that are modernistic in origin are embedded and thus convey a world view that distances one from the natural world.
Chapter Three: High-Profile Theories of Identity and Moral Development

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to examine three widely accepted high-profile theories of identity and moral development found in college-level educational psychology texts for the purpose of bringing into high relief their implicit modernistic frames of mind. This chapter is not intended to be a comprehensive review of all theories of psychosocial development. Rather the purpose is to illuminate implicit modernistic assumptions that continue to perpetuate habits of mind that are destructive to the natural world. Essentially, I am concerned with the ways in which theories of psychosocial development are presented in current educational psychology texts to aspiring teachers. I want to explore what future teachers are reading in regards to how individuals develop for implicit cultural messages that reinforce autonomous individualism, a distancing frame of mind, and hidden cultural assumptions that are modernistic in origin.

As this paper proceeds, it is important to be mindful of the fact that when teachers learn about these theories through educational psychology texts, they are reading a secondary source. They are not reading Erikson’s, Marica’s, or Kohlberg’s primary language, rather these theories are presented to them in the words of the textbook’s author. Understanding that these educational psychology books serve as a “middle-man” so to speak, in terms of what aspects of these theories aspiring teachers are exposed to, aids in the understanding that the authors of the textbooks have interpreted and reported upon Erikson’s, Marica’s, and Kohlberg’s work with their own culturally constructed word view. I am concerned with exploring these secondary interpretations for their implicit cultural assumptions that are modernistic in origin.
In ways that exceed our awareness, our educational institutions pass on cultural paradigms that socialize students to think of human beings as distinct, separate individuals, and the implicit curriculum that transmits these cultural paradigms needs to be made explicit. Theories of identity and moral development found in college-level psychology texts "exert an important influence on what aspects of the culture are transmitted to the next generation" (Bowers, 1993, p. 32). Established theories by such highly esteemed theorists as Erik Erikson, James Marcia, and Lawrence Kohlberg convey modernistic mindsets of autonomous individualism at both explicit and implicit levels that verify the perpetuation of destructive inclinations toward our natural world. In order to bring to light implicit cultural patterns within these theories of identity and moral development that encourage destructive behaviors toward the Earth, it is first necessary to have a comprehensive picture of what these theories represent as standard and factual knowledge for developing identities and moral responsibilities.

As aspiring teachers engage in undergraduate education, it is inevitable that they will come in contact with high-profile theories of psychosocial development that attempt to explain human identity and moral development. Made obvious and evident to all, the explicit curriculum of these theories presents "factual" information based upon scientific inquiry and empirical observation. What is not initially visible is the implicit curriculum that is responsible for socializing teachers to think about developing identities and moral reasoning in a linear, rational, and procedural fashion. At a level below consciousness, aspiring teachers will come to encounter, interpret, and internalize certain cultural patterns and frames of mind embedded within the "facts" of these theories (Bowers,
1997, p. 158). As Bowers notes, “most of our cultural knowledge is experienced at a level that is taken for granted” (p. 158). The cultural paradigms that are learned unconsciously through the study of human development are particularly interesting because it is these “below the waterline” culturally influenced paradigms that lead to a sense of detachment, isolation, and distance from our environment. The only way we become attuned to our destructive behaviors toward the Earth is by becoming cognizant of the cultural mindsets that perpetuate our behaviors. Thus, it is critical to illuminate these cultural ways of knowing, especially ones that are modernistic in origin that underlie these theories because it is these frames of mind that perpetuate behaviors that further distance us from the natural world.

As students in teacher preparation programs engage in a psychological study of human development, they learn that self-identity “involves learning how to center oneself according to the moral norms of the cultural group” (Bowers, 1997, p. 160). According to highly regarded theorists, as an individual progresses through life, there are “stages” in which one must successfully resolve in order to progress in development. Both Erikson’s identity theory and Kohlberg’s moral developmental theory are based upon the notion of successful completion of the “stages” of life, and both are psychosocial in nature. Each theorist asserts that individuals face a developmental crisis at every stage and that each crisis typically involves a conflict between a desirable or undesirable option. The key to successfully developing within these stage theories is the way in which the individual chooses to solve each crisis he/she encounters. The way in which the individual solves the crisis contributes to lasting effects on one’s self-image and view of their role in society. Second, both theories are psychosocial in that an emphasis is placed upon the
relationship between culture and the individual, and these theories attempt to provide explicit explanations about how individuals develop within a cultural world (Woolfolk, 1993, p.66).

*Standard Vocabulary in Theories of Development*

"Self-concept" and "self-esteem" are concepts commonly associated with the study of human development. *Educational Psychology*, by Anita Woolfolk (1993) references the definition of self-concept commonly found in psychology as “the composite of ideas, feelings, and attitudes people have about themselves.” And, “one could also consider the self-concept to be our attempt to explain ourselves to ourselves, to build a scheme (in Piaget’s terms) that organizes our impressions, feelings, and attitudes about ourselves” (p. 74). She also notes that an individual’s self-concept changes from situation to situation. For example, my self-concept regarding my abilities as a student can differ from the self-concept I hold of myself as a teacher. Self-esteem is directly related to the notion of self-concept because a person’s self-esteem is their evaluation of their own self-concept (p. 74). In other words, self-esteem is the extent to which you believe yourself to be a capable and worthy individual (Ormrod, 2000, p. 79).

In discussing the terms and definitions for self-concept and self-esteem, it is important to also understand the factors that influence the development of these concepts. The degree to which humans develop positive or negative self-concepts relies upon three main principles: their own previous actions, the actions and behaviors of other individuals that are directed toward them, and the expectations that other individuals hold for their future performance (Ormrod, 2000, p. 81). Understanding this, it is necessary to notice that these three principles are culturally driven in that they are directly related to...
societal influences on how one perceives oneself. For example, "how students evaluate their own performance also depends to some extent on how the students around them are performing" (p. 82). As students measure themselves according the norms of their peers, they are being culturally influenced, and "the behaviors of other people, both adults and peers, also play a crucial role in the development of students' self-concepts" (Ormrod, 2000, p. 83). As peers and parents accept a child based on societal expectations of socially accepted behavior, that child develops a positive self-concept. Conversely, if peers and parents do not accept a child based on society’s expectations, that child is inclined to develop a negative self-concept.

When studying theories of identity and moral development, the term “identity” arises often and needs clarification. According to Ormrod (2000), one’s identity is defined as a “self-constructed definition of who [one is], what things [one] finds important, and what goals [one] wants to accomplish in life” (p. 80). Theories of identity development as promoted by Erik Erikson and James Marcia rely upon this notion of identity and the ways in which one progresses through stages to discover who they are and the role they play in society. Authors of educational psychology texts use Erikson’s, Marcia’s, and Kohlberg’s stage theories of psychosocial development as a framework in which to further examine specific aspects of an individual’s personal and social development in society (Woolfolk, 1993, p. 75). Using the framework theory allows the opportunity to better understand and view all human behavior within a cultural setting. It is important to note that as these theories rely upon the notion of the individual progressing through established life stages, they are still directly influenced by societal norms, parents, peers, and teachers. Thus, an individual’s “self-concept evolves through
constant self-evaluation in different situations" (p. 76). As individuals constantly compare themselves to those around them, socialization occurs as “children learn society’s norms- the rules determining acceptable and unacceptable behavior” (Ormrod, 2000, p. 89).

Erikson’s and Marcia’s Theories of Identity Development

Erik Erikson is an influential contributor to the study of human development. His theory of identity development provides a “basic framework for understanding the needs of young people in relation to the society in which they grow, learn, and later make their contributions” (Woolfolk, 1993, p. 68). Erikson developed his socialization process theory based on the knowledge that all human beings, including humans in cultures other than the predominant Western world, have similar basic needs that a society is responsible for. He further concludes that an individual’s emotional health in relation to the social environment follows similar basic patterns in every society (p. 66). This relationship between culture and the individual inspired Erikson to develop a theory that is psychosocial in nature. Erikson’s work is based upon the idea that an individual’s emotional needs are related to the social environment. Understanding this, he proposed a theory of development that consisted of eight stages. As Erikson’s theory derives from his extensive experience with psychotherapy and children of all ages and economic backgrounds, he believes that as individuals proceed through the stages, they could proceed to the next stage of their development even if the previous stage was not successfully negotiated. However the consequence is that the individual then carries with him or her the emotional baggage of not successfully completing the previous stage into their future. Erikson’s eight stages represent eight major psychological crises “that have
their roots in the demands of society and that individuals experience over the course of life” (Dembo, 1994, p. 438). Each stage represents a “crisis” that an individual is challenged to successfully resolve in order to progress to the subsequent stage of their development. Each crisis has a desirable and undesirable resolution to it, and the way an individual resolves the crisis adds a new dimension to their identity (p. 438).

Erikson: Stage One and Stage Two

Stage one of Erikson’s theory of psychosocial development is called “Basic Trust vs. Basic Mistrust.” It is at this stage that infants, birth to twelve-eighteen months, must develop and form a trusting, loving connection with their primary caregiver. This is the basic crisis of infancy. It is at this stage that an infant learns that one is an individual, separate from the world around them. “This realization of separateness is part of what makes trust so important: Infants must trust the aspects of their world that are beyond their control” (Bretherton & Walters, 1985, p. 68). If they do not successfully develop this trust and parents fail to provide nurturing care, a child learns to mistrust the world.

Stage two: “Autonomy vs. Shame/Doubt,” occurs between the ages of eighteen months and three years of age. This is the time in a child’s life when they are developing as sense of autonomy. This stage marks the onset of a child’s quest for self-control and self-confidence. This is the time in a child’s development that society begins to demand that the individual do things for themselves independent of a caregiver’s help. For example, a child is expected to walk, feed, and dress all by themselves. It is during this stage that if a child successfully resolves this crisis for autonomy, they develop a sense of confidence and self-reliance that carries into their adult years. If a child unsuccessfully
negotiates this stage, the result is a feeling of shame, guilt, and self-doubt for one’s abilities as an individual and one’s ability to control their environment (pp. 68-69).

Erikson: Stage Three and Stage Four

Stage three of Erikson’s theory references the individual in their early childhood years, three to six years old. This stage is called, “Initiative vs. Guilt.” It is during this stage in an individual’s life that they are “developing an initiative in exploring and manipulating the environment (based on consistent experiences of tolerance, encouragement, and reinforcement)” (Dembo, 1994, p. 439). The crisis at this stage is how a child goes about successfully mastering new tasks and taking the initiative to gain a greater freedom in manipulating their world. If they are successful in resolving the crisis at this stage, Erikson reports that a child will attempt to meet new challenges in the future with greater ease and achievement. As Elkind (1986) notes, “the development of a sense of initiative is more likely to occur when adults allow children to become more self-directing in choosing their own learning activities” (p. 445). However, “guilt occurs when the initiation of these acts or tasks either exceeds the limits of their capabilities or is constantly held in check by parents who want their children to curtail their initiative” (p. 440).

Erikson’s next stage of psychosocial development asserts that individuals must develop a sense of “industry” in order to be successful in our society. It is during stage four, “Industry vs. Inferiority,” that individuals continue to practice their skills of assertiveness and initiative. As Dembo (1994) notes:

The major theme of this period reflects the determination of children to master whatever they are doing. Erikson believes that many individuals’ later attitudes toward work and work habits can be traced back to the degree of a successful sense of industry fostered during this phase. (p. 440)
As individuals develop a sense of industry as a result of successfully mastering “whatever they are doing,” they learn how to be in control of their situations. A sense of guilt and inferiority can develop if an individual does not successfully negotiate this crisis. “A sense of inferiority is caused when the child is not ready for the challenges of school and/or is unable to measure up to the expectations of parents, teachers, or friends” (p. 440).

Erikson: Stage Five

Erikson’s most critical stage of development that propels one into adulthood is the adolescent stage. At this stage, an individual around thirteen to nineteen years of age must resolve the question, “who am I?” It is during stage five, “Identity vs. Identity Confusion,” that adolescents experiment with different identities. The focus of this stage is on the individual dealing with the notion of who they are within the framework of society’s expectations. It is at this point in development, “Erikson notes that the healthy resolution of earlier conflicts can now serve as a foundation for the search of self” (Woolfolk, 1993, p. 70). At this stage, identity “refers to the organization of the individual’s drives, abilities, beliefs, and history into a consistent image of self” (p. 70-71). The search for self and identification of one’s identity is the successful resolution of this stage. If an individual unsuccessfully negotiates this stage and develops a sense of confusion about their role in society, they become delinquents-- “choosing an identity that is the opposite of what society expects- because they would rather have a negative identity than remain a nonentity” (Dembo, 1994, p. 440). When someone is not ready to meet the demands and obligations of assuming an appropriate identity for themselves, they embark upon a period known as “psychosocial moratorium.” Moratorium refers to
an identity crisis, a suspension of choice because of an inherent struggle within oneself (Woolfolk, 1993, p. 71). As noted by Woolfolk (1993):

He used this term to describe a delay in the adolescent’s commitment to personal and occupational choices. This delay is very common, probably healthy, for modern adolescents. [James] Marcia expands the meaning of moratorium to include the adolescent’s active efforts to deal with the crisis of shaping an identity. (p. 71)

This is where James Marica’s “Identity Statuses” come into play. Marcia elaborates on Erikson’s work by proposing four identity statuses that represent patterns and common issues that adolescents experience during this fifth stage. For Marcia, the way an individual goes about finding a mature sense of self and identity is based upon two primary factors: crisis vs. commitment. The “crisis” factor represents a time in an adolescent’s life when they need to choose between different beliefs, and the “commitment” factor references the personal investment the adolescent makes in their decisions and beliefs (p. 441).

Marcia: Identity Statuses

James Marcia believes that the adolescent phase begins at a state known as “identity diffusion.” It is at this point in development that the individual has no identified direction for their life. At this stage, individuals are not certain about what they want out of life, and they have struggled unsuccessfully in the past to make independent choices (Woolfolk, 1993, p. 71). During this stage for Marcia, the adolescent experiences no crisis, a need to choose between different beliefs, or commitment, a personal investment in one’s beliefs. As adolescents develop, they may begin to think about what they want their life to become or represent. They eventually begin to entertain future prospects for their life and they enter a stage termed, “identity moratorium.” “This is the point in an individual’s life when they begin to sense a crisis, a time in their life when they need to
choose between different beliefs, but they have not settled upon a commitment to one particular choice.” It is during this status that the “adolescent considers alternative choices, experiences different roles, but has made no final decision regarding his or her identity” (Dembo, 1994, p. 442). The uncertainty that arises from the fact that one has choices to make about one’s future can produce anxious feelings on the part of the individual. Due to the anxiety that accompanies growing-up and societal pressures one faces in becoming an adult, adolescents experience what is known as “identity foreclosure.” “In this status condition, the individual selects some convenient set of beliefs or goals without carefully considering the alternatives” (Dembo, 1994, p. 442). This is the point where the individual experiences no crisis, but because of societal pressures to choose, commits to a superficial decision about their future goals and aspirations for the purpose of making others happy. Following this status, when an individual develops a strong, solid sense of commitment to choices about their life after carefully considering all the potential options, they have reached a state of “identity achievement.” It is during this stage that an individual feels a crisis, and they successfully resolve that crisis with a commitment to a life goal and responsibilities.

These four “identity statuses” are typically perceived as being developmental through a series of stages like Erikson’s, but they differ in that the successful completion of one stage is not a prerequisite for progressing to the subsequent stages. “Only the moratorium status appears to be necessary for identity achievement, since one can’t develop a mature identity without considering alternative options (Dembo, 1994, p. 442).
Erikson: Stage Six and Stage Seven and Stage Eight

During stage six, “Intimacy vs. Isolation,” individuals around the ages of nineteen to forty years old experience intimate relationships with others. Erikson notes that an individual can not successfully complete this stage, engaging in an intimate relationship, if they do not have a clear sense of self. Individuals must know who they are by this stage before they can expect to participate in a relationship that is intimate in nature where they share a sense of identity with another human being. “The negative polarity is a sense of isolation that is characterized as self-absorption. Because of a fear of losing oneself in the identity of another, some individuals are incapable of developing a strong intimate relationship” (Dembo, 1994, p. 443). When an individual feels a strong sense of self, they are then confident to share this self with another human being. However, if an individual not successfully negotiated any of the previous stages of Erikson’s theory of psychosocial development, such individuals have not cultivated a clear self-concept in order to share with another individual, thus one isolates oneself from the community and those around them.

As an individual proceeds through life, around the ages of forty to sixty-five, one will reach Erikson’s seventh stage of development, “Generativity vs. Stagnation.” During this stage, adults come to terms with their responsibility to find some way to support future generations. For example, parenting and teaching future generations becomes the ultimate goal of one’s responsibility at this stage in life. If one fails to successfully complete this stage, this adult finds no meaning or purpose in life, thus has little interest in self-improvement or making worth-while contributions to society (p. 443).
Finally, the concluding stage of Erikson’s theory represents a state of maturity. This stage, “Ego Integrity vs. Despair” occurs from age sixty-five to death. It is during this stage that an individual engages in a reflection upon and a positive acceptance of one’s life and accomplishments. “Adults with ego integrity can look back on their lives and feel that they were worthwhile. Unsuccessful resolution leads to feelings of despair, incompleteness, and an unfulfilled life” (Dembo, 1994, p. 443).

**Kohlberg’s Theory of Moral Development**

“Kohlberg was devoted to the task of delineating hard stages of justice reasoning. He “sought evidence of structural development characterized by invariant sequence, hierarchical integration, and structured wholeness” (Lapsley, 1996, p.77). The work of Lawrence Kohlberg focuses on the development of children and the ways in which they develop a sense of justice and right verses wrong. His six-stage sequence of moral reasoning “is demarcated into three levels: pre-conventional level, conventional, and post-conventional” (Lapsley, 1996, p. 67). These three levels represent three ways that one relates to the moral expectations of society. Similar to Erikson’s “stage” theory of identity development, Kohlberg also asserts that humans develop their moral sensibility in stages. Kohlberg’s theory declares that humans progress consecutively from one stage to the next. Unlike Erikson’s theory of individual progression through the stages where in which one can progress to the next stage without successfully completing the previous stage, Kohlberg believes that with moral development an individual must proceed through each in an invariant sequence, not skipping any or regressing back to a previous stage. Kohlberg also believes that these stages are not the product of socialization nor do they teach new forms of thinking. Rather he argues that these stages emerge from one’s
own thinking about the moral dilemmas at hand, and as individuals engage in discussions and debates with others, they find their views and thoughts challenged, thus developing their moral identity. According to Kohlberg, individuals progress in their moral reasoning by encountering stages that present dilemmas, “situations to which there is no clear-cut right or wrong response” (Ormrod, 2000, p. 98), which require a resolution through rational thought. Kohlberg also argued that “each succeeding stage is better than the preceding stage on psychological grounds, that is, each new stage is more differentiated and articulated than its predecessor, since each new stage employs cognitive operations that are more stable, more reversible, more equilibrated, and the like” (Lapsley, 1996, p. 45). For Kohlberg, each stage of moral development becomes a closer approximation of the ultimate moral ideal located in stage six.

Kohlberg: Level One

Level one of Kohlberg’s highly esteemed theory of moral development is given the term, “Pre-conventional.” The pre-conventional level describes two of the seven stages of moral development and “moral rules and norms are external to persons” (Lapsley, 1996, p. 67). This initial level of development represents the moral reasoning of a child between the ages of four to ten. It is during stage one, “Obedience and Punishment,” that one’s behavior is primarily motivated by the desire for physical pleasure and the avoidance of physical pain. During this stage, “individuals make moral decisions based on what is best for themselves, without regard for others’ needs or feelings. They obey rules only if established by more powerful individuals; they disobey when they can do so without getting caught” (Ormrod, 2000, p. 99). Stage two, “Individualism, Personal Reward Orientation,” is also part of the pre-conventional level of moral development. As most preschool children, many elementary children, some
middle school students, and few high school students grapple with this level, they will encounter a stage where “individuals begin to recognize that others also have needs. They may attempt to satisfy others’ needs if their own needs are also met in the process. They continue to define right and wrong primarily in terms of consequences to themselves” (Ormrod, 2000, p. 99). This stage reinforces the notion that one’s interests are best served if they exchange favors with someone else. Essentially at this stage, “correct actions” consist primarily of what satisfies one’s own needs, and people become seen as valuable in terms of their utility. Also at this stage, children begin to learn that there is not just one right way of doing something. Rather, moral reasoning becomes relative to individual desires and needs, thus each person feels they are free to pursue his/her individual interests.

**Kohlberg: Level Two**

The second level of Kohlberg’s theory is termed, “Conventional Ethics or Conventional Moral Reasoning,” and it describes stages three and four. “Conventional morality is characterized by an acceptance of society’s conventions concerning right and wrong, and “the self internalizes the expectations of authority” (Lapsley, 1996, p. 67). The individual obeys rules and follows society’s norms even when there is no reward for obedience and no punishment for disobedience” (Ormrod, 2000, p. 99). It is during this level of development that individuals, ages ten to twenty years old, learn to conform to rules and expectations of society, hence the term “conventional.” Understanding what is right and wrong at this level takes into account the approval of others, family expectations, traditional values, and the laws of society (Woolfolk, 1993, p. 80). Stage three, “Good Boy- Nice Girl Orientation,” individuals are entering their teen years when
they begin to realize that one should live up to the expectations of the family and greater community. It is during this stage that “individuals make moral decisions based on what actions will please others, especially authority figures. They are concerned about maintaining interpersonal relationships through sharing, trust, and loyalty” (Ormrod, 2000, p. 99). This is the stage that teens want to please others and gain their approval. Since they are concerned with wanting to please others and fit in, there is much conformity to culturally produced stereotypical images during this time in one’s life.

Stage four, “Law and Order,” is typically categorized as the point when “individuals look to society as a whole for guidelines concerning what is right or wrong. They perceive rules to be inflexible and believe that it is their ‘duty’ to obey them” (Ormrod, 2000, p. 99). Individuals in this stage understand rules to be concrete, and one is driven to maintain social order for its own sake.

Kohlberg: Level Three

The third and final level of Kohlberg’s theory is entitled, “Post-conventional Morality or Autonomous Level” where “what is outside (expectations of authority and of society) and what is inside (self-chosen principles) are clearly distinguished, with emphasis placed on the latter for defining moral options” (Laspley, 1996, p. 67). The ages that individuals morally develop within this level varies. Stage five, “Social Contract,” is embedded within this level. During this stage, the individual comes to terms with the notion that “good is determined by socially agreed-upon standards of individual rights. This is a morality similar to that of the U.S. Constitution” (Woolfolk, 1993, p. 80). Essentially, “individuals recognize that rules represent an agreement among many people about appropriate behavior. They recognize that rules are flexible and can be changed if
they no longer meet society’s needs” (Ormrod, 2000, p. 99). Essentially, “correct action” during this stage is a matter of personal values and individual opinions in light of the fact that rules can be changed if they “no longer meet society’s needs.” However, many individuals never reach this stage of moral reasoning. Rather, stage six is retained as a hypothetical endpoint of development. “The reason why stage six is maintained in Kolhberg’s theory even if not typically reached by all, it nonetheless provides a standard to achieve a ‘stage of optimum complexity’ for moral development to progress to” (Lapsley, 1996, p. 64). It is within this level that “individuals develop their own set of abstract principles to define what actions are morally right and wrong--principles that typically include such basic human rights as life, liberty, and justice” (Ormrod, 2000, p. 99). This level is also termed “principled morality” because it is at this level that individuals follow established rules, but they also understand that at times, rules need be challenged or completely ignored (Eggan & Kauchak, 2001, p. 109).

Stage six, “Universal Ethical Principle Orientation,” is considered the “ideal” stage that many individuals never reach (Ormrod, 2000, p. 101). It is during this stage that an individual adheres to a “strong inner conscious, rather than to authority figures or concrete laws, and they willingly disobey laws that violate their own ethical principles (Ormrod, 2000, p. 101-102). At the heart of this stage, the universal principle of a respect for human beings as individual persons is reinforced. The interests of individuals at this level rely on one’s ability to reason appropriately about what is “right” because it is “right.” For one answers to their inner conscience, but they may “break rules that violate their own ethical principles” (Ormrod, 2000, p. 99) in order to do what is “right.”
Conclusion

In conclusion, Erikson, Marcia, and Kohlberg all present theories of psychosocial development that represent sequencing of stages and a linear progression of rationally finding one's self within a cultural context. It is this reliance upon a linear progression of rationality that these theories reinforce hallmarks of the modern world. In reinforcing these modernistic values, these theories implicitly convey cultural ways of knowing and relating to the natural world that further an autonomous individual frame of mind. This frame of mind serves to disconnect and detach the individual from sensing any connection to or relationship with the environment, thus perpetuating behaviors that tend to misuse and mistreat the Earth's resources. As this chapter provides an overview of what these theorists promote through their theories as standard for developing identities and moral responsibilities within our Western world, the following chapter aims to illuminate certain implicit cultural patterns that emerge from these theories of identity and moral development and argue that they are modernistic in origin and continue to perpetuate an autonomous individual frame of mind that is problematic for the natural world.
Chapter Four: The Implicit Curriculum of Psychosocial Theories of Development

Introduction

Looking at an iceberg, about ten percent can be observed, and ninety percent of the iceberg is hidden below the water line. Using an iceberg as an analogy is helpful to the aims of this paper in that it represents a way to frame one’s thinking about education and its curriculum. School curriculum is analogous to an iceberg in the respect that it also has a highly visible portion, the explicit curriculum, the one that is obvious and gets communicated to all. Also, like an iceberg, school curriculum has a hidden portion, the implicit curriculum, one that is not made explicit or obvious to all, but nonetheless exists and transmits taken-for-granted assumptions that are modernistic in origin. In fact, Eisner (1994) asserts:

Schools teach far more than they advertise. Function follows form. Furthermore, it is important to realize that what schools teach is not simply a function of covert intentions; it is largely unintentional. What schools teach they teach in the fashion that the culture itself teaches, because schools are the kinds of places they are. (pp. 92-93)

Applying this analogy to thinking about high-profile theories of identity and moral development aids in the realization that hidden under the “facts,” explicit knowledge, is a hidden curriculum that conveys cultural knowledge. Furthermore, this taken-for-granted knowledge embedded within the implicit curriculum is asserted to be more powerful than the aims of the explicit curriculum. Thus, it is “the unintended outcomes of schooling, the ones that teachers and administrators seldom plan in advance, [that] are of greater moral significance-- that is more likely to have enduring effects-- than those that are intended and consciously sought” (Jackson, Boostrom, & Hansen, 1993, p. 44).
Keeping in mind the unintended outcomes of schooling and its informal curriculum, the purpose of this chapter is to examine the hidden curriculum of psychosocial theories of development for implicit modernistic assumptions. This purpose warrants investigation because it is at this taken-for-granted level that cultural frames of mind of autonomous individuality get reinforced. This hidden cultural knowledge that is modernistic in origin shapes how humans think about and perceive their relationships with each other and the natural world. As we live within our cultural environment, the way we perceive our world is influenced by culturally constructed norms and expectations. As a result, each of us develops a filter, a way of seeing the world, that is composed of one’s culturally acquired knowledge, beliefs, values, and languages. Whatever we perceive or think about in relation to our world and ourselves is shaped by this filter.

Hidden below the water line of high-profile psychosocial theories of development is an implicit, unofficial curriculum that conveys cultural ways of knowing that directly shapes one’s thinking so that one perceives oneself as an autonomous individual. It is this autonomous individual frame of mind that is leading us to engage in unsustainable actions toward our natural world. Since “we are still, at the deepest level of our thought process, Cartesian thinkers” (Bowers, 1993, p. 25), these theories represent analytical methods of thinking and rational thought. Bowers points out that such theories and their presentation of factual knowledge is representative of our modernistic Western heritage. Because of our modernistic roots, “emphasis [is] given to the authority of reason in guiding people’s lives . . .” (Bowers, 1993, p. 25). It is not the goal nor the primary concern of this paper to critique the ideas presented in these theories for their “factual”
validity. Rather, I am primarily concerned how aspiring teachers’ frames of minds are shaped by the hidden curriculum of these theories in regards to how they think about human development.

As the taken-for-granted assumptions are brought to the foreground for the purpose of exploring how they contribute to shaping one’s frame of mind, it is important to understand how culture, language, and thought are influential in this shaping. Because we are all products of our cultural upbringing, it can be difficult to understand how culture, language, and thought are all interconnected, and how they each have an effect on how we interact with our natural world. The reason it is difficult to be aware of how our cultural upbringing directly influences our thoughts and actions is that, as Bowers (1993) notes:

Language is not a neutral conduit through which ideas are communicated to others, but plays a constitutive role in organizing the thought process itself . . . the metaphorical nature of language involves, as can be seen in the process of analogic thinking- which may have been carried out by earlier generations, encoding a schema of understanding that, in turn, influences current thought processes. (p. 121)

Essentially, the language used in these high-profile theories of psychosocial development encodes a schema of understanding about the modernistic Western culture at a level that goes unnoticed and unquestioned. This culturally influenced schema then directly shapes how aspiring teachers think about the development of individuals within our culture. The way in which teachers’ frames of mind are shaped to think about human development directly influences the ways they act toward and the expectations they have of the maturing members of our society. This is the double bind. When future teachers are exposed to these theories, unbeknownst to them implicit cultural assumptions of a modernistic world view come to shape their frames of mind. As a result, teachers
unconsciously perceive the development of humans in a way that furthers individualism, autonomy, and self-reliance. Associating these qualities with the individual continues to perpetuate an environmentally problematic world view that is centered around the metaphor of the autonomous individual.

Erikson: Stage One and Stage Two

Erik Erikson's theory of identity development represents eight major psychological crises "that have their roots in the demands of society and that individuals experience over the course of life" (Dembo, 1994, p. 438). The language used in educational psychology texts to discuss identity development has its roots in past thoughts and behaviors, and it encodes the thought processes of earlier stages of our cultural history (Bowers, 1993, p. 26). These earlier thoughts and behaviors are framed around modernistic habits of mind, and as we look at each stage in turn for its implicit modernistic agenda, it is important to be cognizant of the language used to keep the constant focus on the individual as the basic social unit.

Stage one, "Basic Trust vs. Basic Mistrust," and stage two, "Autonomy vs. Shame/Doubt," both set the stage for socializing its audience toward the autonomous individual frame of mind. Stage one asserts that the crisis for the infant is identifying oneself as an individual, separate from the world around them. "This realization of separateness is part of what makes trust so important: Infants must trust the aspects of their world that are beyond their control" (Bretherton & Walters, 1985, p. 68). The language used by Erikson at the onset of these two stages of development conveys the idea that individualism and separateness are inherent, "natural," traits of all human beings. The taken-for-granted understandings of Erikson's theory comes to suggest that
individualism and separation occur innately at birth, and he also asserts that these qualities are essential to cultivate by two years of age if the child is to successfully negotiate and complete the seven subsequent stages of identity development. The language used here encodes a schema for understanding that humans are inherently individualistic and separate at their very inception. This language used by Erikson plays a constitutive role in how future educational leaders view the "nature" of human beings.

The implicit modernistic assumptions of stage one also mention the role of society in shaping the individual. As "the society begins to demand" that the individual do things for themselves independent of a caregiver’s help— for example walking, feeding, and dressing independently, a child successfully resolves this crisis for autonomy. Erikson believes this successful resolution results in the development of a sense of confidence and self-reliance that carries into their adult years. Implied within this statement is the notion that society molds and shapes an individual. Thomas Hobbes argues (cited in Smith 1992) “that society is made up of individuals who, like the particles that constitute matter, are discrete, independent, and in constant motion” (p. 28). Hobbes talks about the modern society and its expectations for individuals to act independently. The unspoken understandings of this stage reinforces the idea that one is expected to conform to societal expectations of autonomous individualism if one wants to be successful within that society. Erikson goes on to suggest that if a child unsuccessfully negotiates this stage, the result is a feeling of shame, guilt, and self-doubt for one’s abilities as an individual and one’s ability to control their environment (Woolfolk, 1993, p. 68-69). The modern age thrives on the idea of humans’ ability to predict and control the natural world for the purpose of individual and social betterment and advancement. In the modern world,
worth is based upon one’s ability to be in control to successfully gain material possessions. According to Erikson, by the age of three, society places demands upon the child that they develop a sense of autonomy, independence, and individuality in order to control their environment. These cultural assumptions encode a schema of understanding that influences individuals to believe that autonomy and independence are not only “natural,” they are essential for a successful life in the modern world.

Erikson: Stage Three and Stage Four

By the age of twelve, Erikson asserts, children are developing appropriately in terms of societal norms if they are able to develop initiative to explore and manipulate their environment, as well as cultivate an internal sense of perseverance and assertiveness to master whatever it is they are doing. As a child goes about mastering new tasks, they take the initiative to gain greater freedom in manipulating their world. Reinforced with the use of this language is the idea that fostering initiative means gaining a greater freedom to be oneself and manipulate the natural world in ways that further individual betterment.

Stage three emphasizes the ideals of the individual learning to be able to master a new task and how this feeling associated with mastery fuels the desire to be in control of manipulating the environment to achieve the desires of the individual. Otherwise, if individuals do not or cannot cultivate their sense of initiative, thus come to successfully manipulate their world for individual gain, they will develop feelings of guilt. During stage three, initiative equates self-direction and control, while guilt equates dependency and complacency.
Stage four, "Industry vs. Inferiority," further reinforces the modernistic ideas of stage three. According to stage four, as individuals cultivate their sense of initiative, one begins to experience industry and perseverance. Erikson notes that as children are expected by society to master new tasks on their own, they develop perseverance, which then fosters an individual's initiative and assertiveness to control and manipulate their environment. As Dembo (1994) notes:

The major theme of this period reflects the determination of children to master whatever they are doing. Erikson believes that many individuals' later attitudes toward work and work habits can be traced back to the degree of a successful sense of industry fostered during this phase. (p. 440)

As maintained by Erikson, it is during this stage that children learn that industry, diligence toward completing a task is a desirable trait to attain. This is the time when individuals "are beginning to see the relationship between perseverance and the pleasure of a job completed" (Woolfolk, 1993, p. 69). As children experience the success that comes from being perseverant, they advance their sense of assertiveness and initiative to be self-directing and in control.

Key themes of these two stages of psychosocial development are freedom, individualism, mastery, and domination. The taken-for-granted understandings communicated through the language that Erikson utilizes in describing these stages socialize one to embrace these inherently modernistic ideals. Take for example the ideas of individualism and freedom and how these terms are used within the context of this theory. The manner in which both of these terms are used comes to suggest that the individual is the basic social unit and that each individual has the undeniable right to be free and self-directing. Bowers (1993) notes:
Individualism is generally associated with the idea of freedom. But "freedom" is also a metaphor that encodes different schemas of understanding, depending upon the historically formative analogues. But the most powerful analogue, which is that of the autonomous individual, suggests that freedom is a matter of choosing one's own values, one's self-identity, and future. (p. 25)

Because of the autonomous individual frame of mind, the implicit modernistic assumptions further reinforce embracing the individual because it assumes an inherent freedom to master one's world and be in control and in possession of what is rightfully theirs, their freedom to be self-directing. This language encodes the "central premise of the modern era [as being] a society composed of isolated individuals whose central preoccupation is the pursuit of their own development and economic self-interest" (Smith, 1992, p. 33).

"Freedom," in terms of the Western frame of mind, means being free from all restraints, the ability to exercise free-will, and the freedom to do what one wishes. Erikson's theory encourages an idea of freedom as being contained within the individual, ensuring the individual the right to do whatever they deem appropriate for their personal and individual betterment. This idea of freedom can be seen in two lights; a freedom for something and a freedom from something. The way it is positioned within this theory, the implicit curriculum advocates a freedom for self-interest, self-direction, rational thought, and individual gain. This notion of freedom furtherers an anthropocentric view of the world, "that is, the world is to be understood and valued only from the perspective of human needs, interests, and sense of rationality" (Bowers, 1993, p. 28). The freedom for self-direction is conveyed through these cultural assumptions. The current definition and assumption associated with the idea of freedom is putting us in a double bind that is difficult to escape. As we interpret and honor the view of freedom for an individual's
right to do whatever one wants, we create greater problems for our relations with each other and the natural world. The notion of freedom as communicated through this theory “leads to thinking of self at the same time as both self-directing and the center of an autonomous rational and moral authority” (Bowers, 1993, p. 27). The double bind is the idea that this view “undermines the sense of being interdependent with the larger social and biotic community. Responsibility is thus viewed in terms of self-interest; and if there is any awareness of living in an interdependent world it is likely to be viewed as an unwelcome constraint on individual freedom” (Bowers, 1993, p. 27).

Freedom, as it is used within this theory, also suggests a freedom from something. Two principles of the modern world view as seen reinforced by this notion of freedom are using human rationality to control the world in ways that advance one’s own progress (Smith, 1992, p.20) and the idea that individuals are the basic social unit. As Smith says, as an individual, one can then make great contributions to society if they are “allowed to develop personal talents free from the restrictions imposed by traditional forms of human association (Smith, 1992, p. 20). As we foster this sense of becoming self-directing and free from restrictions of human association, we create a detachment from not only our human communities but our natural ones as well. This fixation on a detachment from both types of communities has contributed to a preoccupation with individual security (Smith, 1992, p. 27). As Smith (1992) further states, as long as the modern world view embraces this individualism over a sense of “collective responsibility” we will always seek to “guarantee our own well being and self-interest” (p. 27) and further advance destructive actions upon our environment.
Embedded within the idea of individual freedom are the modernistic notions of the values of mastery and domination, and the idea that all individuals are free to be self-directing and in control of their world. The implicit assumptions in stage three and four emphasize the notion that not only are individualism and freedom highly-regarded traits of a Western culture, these traits are highly esteemed because the acquisition of them leads to control and domination. The modern age furthers the notion of humans’ ability to predict and control the natural world for the purpose of human betterment and advancement, and in fact, this is a key element of a modern world. “Society, like the natural world, is subject to human control . . .” and “given our ability to understand and control both the natural world and society, humans can anticipate advancing toward ever-increasing levels of material comfort and security” (Smith, 1992, p. 20). The advancement toward increasing levels of material comfort and security is what fuels this desire to be in control and dominate the natural world. For it is believed that it’s only in having control and being dominant over our environment that we can truly express ourselves as free individuals.

*Erikson: Stage Five*

Implicit modernistic assumptions of stage five, “Identity vs. Identity Confusion,” convey highly problematic themes for an interrelated relationship with nature. The hidden ideas embedded within this theory of psychosocial development encourage Western ideas of atomism and rational thought. Psychosocial theories of development all rely upon a common language system that is culturally influenced by our Western world. The language used in educational psychology texts to discuss identity development is based upon culturally constructed root metaphors of individualism and autonomy. According to
Bowers (1997), "individuals think in the languages learned through interaction with
significant others, and the language encode the metaphors that reflect the cultural group’s
understanding of the moral nature of relationships" (p. 160). The common language used
among psychosocial theories of identity development socializes future educators to a
shared sense of what it means to development individually and morally in the Western
world. The taken-for-granted cultural understandings embedded within theories of
psychosocial development socialize teachers to center themselves “according to the moral
norms of the cultural group” (Bowers, 1997, p. 160).

The most common terms typically associated with identity and moral
development are “self-concept” and “self-esteem.” The definitions of these concepts
provide a linguistic foundation upon which these theories rest, and they also have hidden
cultural assumptions. Self-concept is typically acknowledged within the realm of
psychology as a composite of ideas, feelings, and attitudes people have about themselves
(Woolfolk, 1993, p. 74). In school, the idea of self-concept is multifaceted and
hierarchical in nature. Self-concept is composed of one’s perceptions of their competence
in three areas: cognitive, social, and physical. These areas are further broken down to
represent one’s cognitive abilities in reading, math, science, and other areas; social
competence in terms of popularity with peers and the ability to talk with adults; and
physical competences as defined by athletic abilities and physical attractiveness (Ormrod,
2000, p. 80). “Students have many separate but sometimes related concepts of
themselves. The overall sense of self appears to be divided into at least three separate, but
slightly related, self-concepts” (Woolfolk, 1993, p. 76). In addition, it is commonly
agreed upon by multiple educational psychology texts that self-concept evolves through
constant self-evaluation of one’s performance in relation to their peers. Our view of our abilities and worthiness as an individual is always seen in relation to others. Our self-perception as related to our comparisons to other humans directly influences our self-esteem. “Self-esteem is an affective or emotional reaction to the self” as the self is compared with others (self-concept) (Eggen & Kauchak, 2001, p.99). Thus self-esteem is commonly defined as one’s evaluation of their own self-concept (Woolfolk, 1993, p. 74) and the extent to which one believes themselves to be a capable and worthy individual (Ormord, 2000, p. 77).

Looking closely at the language used to define self-concept by Woolfolk and Ormrod, the hidden cultural assumptions become visible. “Students have many separate but sometimes related concepts of themselves. The overall sense of self appears to be divided into at least three separate, but slightly related, self-concepts” (Woolfolk, 1993, p. 76). Implicitly understood here is a primary principle of modernistic thought—atomism. This is the idea that the whole is nothing more than the sum of its parts and everything can be reduced to its lowest unit (Berman, 1994, p. 238). This definition of self-concept reinforces the idea that a human being and their sense of self, thus the whole, is in fact nothing more that the sum of its parts, the compilation of ones cognitive, social, and physical competence. This language reinforces the notion that an individual’s identity and self-concept is fragmented in nature, and that who one is as a whole person in our culture is dependent upon one having all the right parts, i.e. cognitive, social, and physical competence. This definition also states that not only are the parts that make up one’s self-concept disconnected, they are only “slightly related.” Implicitly this language is conveying the notion that our self-concepts are composed of fragmented parts that are
not even really related or connected, thus implicitly reinforcing modernistic principles as separation, isolation, and detachment.

In terms of self-actualization, successfully negotiation of stage five is critical. Our Western culture demands that individuals come to know their identity by the age of nineteen. The reason our culture is so adamant about this notion is that it is only by knowing oneself that one can control and dominate their world. If by the age of nineteen, an individual does not have a clear sense of self and how they conform to the norms of society, they experience what Marcia calls identity moratorium. If an individual unsuccessfully negotiates stage five and develops a sense of confusion about their role in society, they become delinquents--“choosing an identity that is the opposite of what society expects--because they would rather have a negative identity than remain a nonentity” (Dembo, 1994, p. 440). When someone is not ready to meet the demands and obligations of assuming an appropriate identity for themselves, they embark upon a period known by Erikson as, “psychosocial moratorium,” an identity crisis and suspension of choice because of an inherent struggle within oneself (Woolfolk, 1993, p. 71). He used this term to “describe a delay in the adolescent’s commitment to personal and occupational choices. This delay is very common, probably healthy, for modern adolescents. Marcia expands the meaning of moratorium to include the adolescent’s active efforts to deal with the crisis of shaping an identity (Woolfolk, 1993, p. 71). In essence, what is being implicitly conveyed is the idea that if an individual does not come to terms with who they are within the social fabric of the society, they lack the ability to be self-directing and in control of their life. Lack of self-direction and control in a world that honors these traits means failure, guilt, and isolation.
The taken-for-granted understandings of stage five of Erikson’s theory and Marcia’s four identity statuses further reinforce modernistic principles of atomism and rational thought. During this stage, identity “refers to the organization of the individual’s drives, abilities, beliefs, and history into a consistent image of self” (p. 70-71). This language emphasizes an atomistic view of the individual in that it comes to suggest that an individual is nothing more than the sum of its parts. According to modern, mechanistic, and atomistic ways of thinking, the universe was essentially composed of distinct parts that worked together like a machine, humans could gain a deeper understanding of the whole system by breaking the system down and studying its inherent parts. Likewise, educational psychology texts represent the individual as a composite of distinct, differentiated parts. According to Erikson, it is these distinct entities all put together that compose an individual. Thus if an individual is lacking any one of these “parts,” they are seen to be lacking a sense of self or identity.

Marcia: Identity Statuses

The taken-for-granted cultural assumptions of Maria’s “identity status” reinforce the modernistic principle of rational thought. According to Marcia, “reality is only encountered as we detach ourselves from lived experiences and examine it with intellectual tools that lead not to holistic participation but to an objective analysis of its component parts” (Smith, 1992, p. 24). Marcia’s theory stresses the detachment from lived experience for the purpose of intellectual examination, i.e. rational thought, for the goal of an objective analysis of the component parts of individual self-identity. Marcia extends Erikson’s work by proposing four identity statuses that represent patterns that adolescents experience during this fifth stage.
When an individual has not reached the level of self-actualization and has not been able to answer the critical question, “who am I,” Marcia claims that such individual experiences what is known as “identity diffusion.” It is at this point in development that the individual has no identified direction for their life. They are not certain about what they want out of life, and they have struggled unsuccessfully in the past to make independent choices (Woolfolk, 1993, p. 71). In terms of rational thought, an individual grappling with this state is unable to rationally identify who they are and how they fit within the social framework. These individuals are not able to think rationally about choices that society would have liked them to have made by this point in their life.

Identity diffusion represents the absence of rational thought in an individual. As the explicit curriculum conveys this absence to be negative, unhealthy, and undesirable and leading to a lack of purpose and sense of self, the hidden modernistic assumptions convey the presence of rational thought to be good, necessary, and purposeful.

As an individual begins to employ rational thought, they experience “identity moratorium.” “This is point in an individual’s life when they begin to feel a crisis, a time in their life when they need to choose between different beliefs, but they have not settled upon a commitment to one particular choice.” It is during this stage that the “adolescent considers alternative choices, experiences different roles, but has made no final decision regarding his or her identity” (Dembo, 1994, p. 442). As individuals are encouraged to experiment with different choices and roles, they are essentially encouraged to think rationally about whom they want to be and what which societal expectations they want to adapt as their own. Rationality in this sense, becomes a basis of individual authority and an emphasis is given to the authority of reason in guiding people’s lives (Bowers, 1993,
The individual learns that rational thought leads to determining what is right or wrong and appropriate for that individual.

Rational thought is also reinforced with Marcia’s third identity status, “identity foreclosure.” “In this status condition, the individual selects some convenient set of beliefs or goals without carefully considering the alternatives” (Dembo, 1994, p. 442). Because of societal pressures to choose, an individual commits to a superficial decision about their future goals and aspirations for the purpose of making others happy. The implicit modernistic assumptions suggest that individuals facing an identity crisis engage in rational thought as they choose a set of convenient beliefs and accept them as their own, and they think about what society’s expectations and norms are and make a rational attempt to conform to these ideals. These ideals being that of an autonomous individual who relies upon individual rational thought as their moral compass.

Once an individual successfully adopts socially acceptable responsibilities of the dominant culture and rationally commits to accepting a life goal, “identity achievement” is acquired. A strong, solid sense self results from rationally committing to choices about one’s life as dictated by societal norms, societal norms that further modernistic behaviors of the autonomous individual and personal choice. This implementation of rational thought to decide upon which beliefs, ideals, and values one will accept as their own in order to define their sense of self further reinforces a reliance upon the modernistic values of rational reasoning and individualism.

Erikson: Stage Six

Stage six of Erikson’s theory of identity development, “Intimacy vs. Isolation,” is the final stage that this chapter will explore for its taken for granted understandings.
Stage six delineates what is developmentally essential to an intimate relationship. Erikson notes that an individual cannot successfully complete this stage, engage in an intimate relationship, if one has not cultivated a clear sense of self. Individuals must know who they are by this stage before they can expect to participate in a relationship that is intimate in nature because one must know who they are before they can share it with another. When an individual feels a strong sense of self, they are then confident to share this self with another.

The language of this stage inherently carries with it the modernistic metaphors of autonomous individualism and atomism. Erikson is essentially saying that in order to be successful in an intimate relationship with another, one has to be an autonomous individual. A relationship can only work if it consists of two independent individuals, confident in their knowledge of self and ability to control their own word. Without a mature construct of self and independence, an individual is considered relationally deficient. The explicit curriculum of this stage suggests that one cannot be a part of a relationship if one is not first a self-actualized, rational individual.

“As in any form of communication, foreground messages (explicit and ‘factual’ information) are always embedded in an equally powerful background message system (the domain of implicit cultural assumptions)” (Bowers, 1993, p. 120), so in lies the hidden understandings that reinforce the idea that even within a relationship, partners do not rely upon the partnership to give them a sense of self. Rather, the partnership or relationship is not truly a complete relation at all because it is composed of two independent individuals. Embracing this sense of self and individualism creates a sense of separation that is a source of power for each individual. Each individual interacts
within the relationship as a distinct entity, acting on his/her own behalf and a true sense of partnership or relation never truly develops because one has been taught since birth that relationships and dependencies upon another are undesirable. In effect what is conveyed is the atomistic view of the Western relationship where in which the whole, the relationship is nothing more than the sum of its parts, the autonomous individuals. What needs to be addressed here is the manner in which this language is defining relationships. The language reinforces "the belief that society is composed of unrelated individuals whose only reason for association is the protection of self-interest has undercut the authority of broader social meaning" (Smith, 1992, p. 31). As the language of autonomous individualism pervades the implicit curriculum of this high-profile theory of development, humans come to unconsciously emulate this ideal.

Kohlberg: Theory of Moral Development

Erikson’s and Marcia’s theories of psychosocial development are not alone in distinctly conveying cultural assumptions that are modernistic in origin through the implicit curriculum. Lawrence Kohlberg’s theory of moral development implicitly puts forth modernistic frames of mind of autonomy, individualism, and rational thought in similar ways. As the taken-for-granted frames of mind are made evident here, it is important to be cognizant that “Kohlberg’s stages reflect the abstract perspective of the rational moral subject.” These stages “provide rational foundations for morality independently from context” (Lapsley, 1996, p. 47). The theory’s focus on concepts that are to be studied independent from context and abstract in nature further supports the inherently modernistic undertones located within the implicit curriculum. Kohlberg believed that the child was a naïve moral philosopher, progressing through life by
encountering moral dilemmas that require the application of moral reasoning, and that this progression lead to the ultimate form of rational moral thought that is abstract and based upon detached universal principles. Kohlberg's theory of moral development aligns itself along a continuum of adequacy--one develops more adequate moral rational thought progressively (Lapsley, 1996, p. 43). Central to Kohlberg's theory is the notion that development from a less adequate form of moral reasoning to a more sophisticated form of reasoning is dependent upon progressive advancement toward a premium final stage that represents ultimate moral rational thought. This final stage, stage six, "Universal Ethical Principle," represents the epitome of locating rational moral authority within the individual.

Kohlberg's theory of moral development implicitly reinforces taken-for-granted modernistic assumptions of progress, autonomous individualism, abstract rational thought, and anthropocentrism. It is the progressive nature of his theory toward an epitomized ideal of locating abstract rational thought within the individual that suggests these hidden assumptions. Kohlberg asserts that each new stage is "better" on rational and moral grounds that the previous stage. As Kohlberg delineates the pre-conventional level to represent morality and rules to be external to the individual, the conventional level to represent morality and rules as being internalized by the individual, and the post-conventional level to represent a combination of moral rational thought that is located both outside and inside the individual, with a focus on rational thought as located inside the individual for defining moral options, one taken-for-granted assumption that get conveyed focuses upon the modernistic principle of linear progression. What gets communicated is the idea that naïve moral reasoning by children represents a less
developed form of rational thought, and this is considered to be "undesirable" in the adult years for a rationally stable autonomous individual. As Kohlberg’s theory asserts hidden cultural assumptions that further the modernistic ideal of linear progress, an individual’s frame of mind is shaped to consider change to be progressive and desirable. As individuals unknowingly adopt a world view where in which change signifies progress toward an epitomized ideal, traditions and established customs are seen as backward and naïve. Understanding this, traditions and customs that respect and encourage sustainable ecological practices are devalued because of their lack of the modernistic zeal of progressiveness.

Following along the continuum of Kohlberg’s theory, one progresses to the ultimate stage of moral thought that represents a “more” developed rationality. This highly developed rational thought found in stage six is considered to be progressively “good” and “desirable”--a perfected model of human reasoning for an individual functioning in the modern world. Kohlberg’s theory represents rational moral thought as developing toward a glorified end that locates rational moral authority within the individual. This notion of progress supports a frame of mind that shapes how one views their developing moral identity. The underlying modernistic assumption is the idea that progression to the highly-esteemed ideal of becoming an autonomous rational moral agent where authority lies within the individual is a desirable and necessary aim of human beings in the Western world.

Being progressive in nature, Kohlberg’s theory focuses on level three, post-conventional, to represent idyllic rational moral thought. Stage five, “Social Contract” and stage six, “Universal Ethical Principle,” both exemplify and perpetuate hidden
cultural assumptions that reinforce autonomous individualism, the location of rational
authority in the individual, and anthropocentrism. As stage five and six stand as a
reference point that allows one to judge growth of rational moral thought in the previous
stages, these stages serve to symbolize high-status privileged moral rational thought of
the individual. In stage five, “the person reasoning according to the social contract
understands that a society of rational people need socially agreed-on laws in order to
function” (Eggen & Kauchak, 2001, p. 110). And according to Lapsely (1996),
“standards that maximize and protect individual human rights are established by free
persons. . .” (p. 72). The implicit modernistic assumptions that get conveyed privilege the
individual above community and humans above nature. As stage five focuses on
establishing rationally agreed on laws that protect the freedom of individuals to be just
that, individuals, it also positions human beings hierarchically above nature in the human-
Earth relationship. Because of the theory’s progressive nature, placing these ideals in
stage five, a stage that is highly-regarded as an ultimate ideal in which to strive toward
subtly communicates that which is of utmost value in our modern world-- individual
freedom to be self-directing void of any communal ties and the idea that humans are the
managers of the natural world. These hidden modernistic assumptions shape one’s frame
of mind in ways that discourage and devalue connections with both one’s community and
the environment.

Moral thought as represented by Kohlberg in stage six is centered upon inherently
modernistic principles of logical comprehensiveness, abstract notions, and universal
standards. “Good and right are matter of individual conscience and involve abstract
concepts of justice, human dignity, and equality” (Woolfolk, 1993, p. 80). Moral
reasoning in stage six encourages equality of human rights and the respect for the dignity of human beings as "individual persons." Because of the progressive nature of Kohlberg’s theory, "individual progress from the stage of external morality, where rules are enforced by authority figures, to the stage of autonomous morality, where individuals see morality as rational" (Eggen & Kauchak, 2001, p. 119). Kohlberg’s theory reinforces the idea that progression to "autonomous morality, where individuals see morality as rational" is the idealized goal. The taken-for-granted assumption that gets conveyed at a level that exceeds one’s awareness is this notion that rational moral authority rests within the individual and that the detached rational thought of the individual holds the rights of individuals above all else. The idea that progression toward an ideal that encourages detached rational thought based on individual authority has several significant implications for humanity and the environment.

What are the implications of utilizing a high-profile theory to teach moral development that furthers taken-for-granted assumptions that idealize the progressive nature of autonomous morality where in which individuals progress toward a morality that is rational and located within one’s self? Rational personal choice is stressed. As “a person reasoning on this level understands that what is considered right by the majority may not be considered right by an individual in a particular situation,” moral responsibility is viewed in terms of self-interest (Bowers, 1993, p. 93). As individual autonomy and rational moral choice are stressed as the epitome of Kohlberg’s theory, what results is a lessened moral obligation towards other human beings and the Earth. As “authority is located in the rational process of the individual” (Bowers, 1993, p. 28), one makes rational personal choices that are based upon an autonomous individual frame of
mind which is orientated toward self and human concerns. Thus, there exists little room for conscience thought toward concerns that exist outside one’s self. For example, as individuals adopt this frame of mind, environmental obligations are diminished and an “anthropocentric view of the world is understood and valued only from the perspective of human needs” (Bowers, 1993, p. 27). With this anthropocentric frame of mind in place, one believes it to be rational to “manage” the Earth’s resources for individual human gain because one’s frame of mind leads one to believe that human beings are the rational moral sources of authority where what is “right” means what is “right” for humans, not the environment.

As Kohlberg’s theory of moral development emphasizes the progression of moral reasoning from a less developed form of locating moral rational thought as outside of oneself to the idealized state locating rational moral authority within the individual, moral obligations towards community and the environment are dramatically lessened. His theory’s progression toward the ideal of the individual being the source of rational moral authority where in which rights of the individual are maximized, the taken for granted assumptions embedded within this theory reinforce the detachment of one’s self from any moral responsibilities toward our natural world. As humans are idealized as the rational moral authority, detached from environmental and social communities, their rational “right action” only considers themselves.

Conclusion

High-profile theories of psychosocial development are considered to be a source of objective information and analytical method of rational thought, yet they do much more than convey factual, objective knowledge. As these theories are utilized to teach
identity and moral development, they inadvertently convey taken-for-granted modernistic assumptions. This is the double bind we face. Lying beneath the "facts" and explicit information of Erikson’s, Marcia’s, and Kohlberg’s theories of psychosocial development, rests taken-for-granted cultural assumptions that shape an individual’s frame of mind that inadvertently get reinforced with the study of these theories. The taken-for-granted understandings of these highly regarded, socially accepted theories reinforce a worldview that furthers the autonomous individual frame of mind and locates rational moral authority in the individual. As "correct" action is a matter of personal value and individual opinion as based upon rational evaluation, humans learn to locate rational moral authority within themselves. Locating rational moral authority within the individual serves as a guide in which individuals live out their lives. As the implicit modernistic assumptions inherent in high-profile theories influence the mature members of our society to think about the developing identities and moral responsibilities of human beings as autonomous individuals that engage in a non-participatory relationship with the social and environmental communities, these ideals are passed on to future generations. Chapter five, "Ecological Consequences of a Problematic Double Bind," addresses the ecological consequences of perpetuating a frame of mind that furthers the notion that individuals are inherently independent and autonomous beings. This chapter directly addresses the ways in which taken-for-granted assumptions found in high-profile theories inadvertently reinforce modernistic assumptions of autonomy, individualism, and moral reasoning based on rational thought.
Chapter Five: Ecological Consequences of a Problematic Double Bind

Introduction

"There is no single cause for any aspect of the ecological crisis, but there are complex and interconnected cultural patterns, beliefs, and values that collectively help introduce perturbations into ecosystems, causing them to go into decline" (Bowers, 1993, p. 19). This chapter aims to illuminate those interconnected cultural patterns, beliefs, and values that collectively help introduce perturbations into our ecosystem. In order to do so, this chapter will bring into high relief the implicit modernistic assumptions embedded within high-profile theories of development. I argue that these taken-for-granted assumptions are a key factor in the double bind in which we find ourselves. As high-profile theories are used to educate teachers about human development, taken-for-granted modernistic assumptions of autonomy, individualism, and moral reasoning based on rational thought get inadvertently reinforced, and the more we rely upon these theories, the more we reinforce these cultural assumptions. Reinforcing cultural assumptions that privilege an autonomous individual frame of mind put out of focus values of interdependence, community, and connectedness. As a result of acting accordingly with an autonomous individual frame of mind, individuals further distance and detach themselves from the natural world. It is this act of detachment on the part of individuals from the natural world that serves to exacerbate the ecological crisis.

As the Earth and its current ecological state are discussed in this chapter, it is not my aim provide a summary of the status of the current environmental state of affairs as made evident by the media on a daily basis. This chapter is not about reporting that "roughly 80% of European forests have been damaged by acid rain... ultraviolet
radiation reaching the ground in Toronto is now increasing at 5% per year. . .[and] there has been a marked decline in populations of amphibians worldwide” (Orr, 2004, p. 1.). Rather, the aim of this chapter is to show the relationship between taken-for-granted assumptions that high-profile psychosocial theories of identity and moral development implicitly perpetuate by the language they employ and environmental disarray. Their language conveys root metaphors that honor the rational autonomous individual, and these inherently modernistic root metaphors are implicitly socializing future educators’ frames of mind to support these modernistic ideals. This is problematic. As the mature members of our society function in the world with culturally influenced frames of mind of the autonomous individual, they unknowingly encourage principles of separation, isolation, and anthropocentricism.

As “individuals think in the language learned through interaction with significant others, the language encodes the metaphors that reflect the cultural group’s understanding of the moral nature of relationships” (Bowers, 1997, p. 160). The metaphor of the autonomous individual as promoted though the implicit curriculum of high-status theories of identity development is currently shaping the way in which individuals center themselves according to the moral norms of the culture, and it is this act of centering oneself according to an autonomous individual frame of mind that creates the double bind I speak of. Centering oneself according to root metaphor of the autonomous individual contributes to self-directive thinking about personal responsibility and one’s relation to the environment, and it influences one’s thoughts and behaviors toward the natural world. Thus, the current view of the individual serves to “undermine the sense of being interdependent with the larger social and biotic community” (Bowers, 1997, p. 27).
Double Bind: Personal Responsibility and Environmental Disconnect

The notion of a double bind entails both intended and unintended consequences that result from taking action toward a desired end. The specific double bind represented in this chapter illuminates multifaceted unintended consequences. For example, using high-profile theories of psychosocial development to teach identity and moral growth has intended outcomes—the conveyance of the “facts” of how one develops both morally and individually. However, in addition to the intended outcomes of using such aforementioned theories to teach these “facts,” an unintended, multifaceted outcome occurs. This unintended outcome is the implicit conveyance of taken-for-granted cultural assumptions that rely upon the notion of centering oneself according to the autonomous individual frame of mind. Furthermore, it is this frame of mind that serves to undermine values of interdependency, connection, and community while further privileging values of autonomy, personal moral authority, and individuality. Privileging an autonomous individual frame of mind influences one’s sense of personal responsibility in a way that has negative consequences for the natural world because one adopts a mindset where in which one’s moral obligations primarily center around one’s self, and obligations toward the natural world are dramatically diminished.

The ever present “relationship between language and thought, where language is more deterministic in direct relation to the individual’s taking its cultural formulations for granted, is related to how the myth of individual autonomy contributes to thinking about personal responsibility” (Bowers, 1993, p. 27). Personal responsibility in the eyes of a culturally influenced autonomous individual equates a reliance upon a freedom to be self-directing with the positioning of rational and moral authority in the individual without of
any sense of tradition. A reliance upon self-direction as a result of a modernistic frame of mind “asserts that we as a species can liberate ourselves from restraints imposed by nature and that our domination of the physical world diminishes our need to rely on one another to attain satisfactory levels of personal security” (Smith, 1192, p. 19). The mindset that it is an individual’s right or obligation to be self-sufficient, self-directing, and self-centered has negative consequences for how we interact with the natural world because we engage in a dominant relationship where in which we are able to rationalize the exploitation of Earthly goods for our self-directing notions.

Both Erikson and Kolhberg focus on the notion of individuals becoming personally responsible for their ability to take control of their lives as early as possible. For Erikson, this indoctrination starts as early as birth. In the first few years of life, as infants learn to be independent and separate from the world, they learn that it is expected of them to become personally responsible for their actions separate from everyone else. As infants enter stage two of Erikson’s theory, they are expected to develop their sense of autonomy for the purpose of cultivating personally responsible behaviors that are important to successfully negotiating stage three and four.

Becoming personally responsible, according to Erikson, entails cultivating an internal sense of initiative and desire to explore and manipulate their environment, as well as cultivate an internal sense of perseverance and assertiveness to master whatever one is doing. As children experience the success that comes from being perseverant, they advance their sense of assertiveness and initiative to be self-directing and personally responsible. Furthermore, as stage five of Erikson’s theory stresses that the adolescent rationally answer the question of, “who am I,” one is expected to be personally
responsible for identifying who they are in terms of societal expectations. The search for self and identification of one’s identity is the successful resolution of this stage, and assuming one successfully comes to terms with who they are, they are seen as being personally responsible for the direction of their life.

Kohlberg’s theory of moral development reinforces the progressive nature of human development toward an ideal of locating rational moral authority and personal responsibilities within the individual. The positioning of rational and moral authority in the individual without any sense of tradition and a freedom to be self-directing furthers our self-serving, self-directing quest for material comfort and security as fueled by our culturally shaped frames of mind that value the autonomous individual. As a result, our moral obligations toward the natural world are diminished, we think of the natural world as something separate and distant from us, and an anthropocentric world view is reinforced. As our culturally shaped frames of mind guide us to view the natural world from the perspective of human needs, it becomes rational for humans to manage its resources in ways that serve human needs.

Personal responsibility as a root metaphor of the autonomous individual also reinforces the centering of rational and moral authority within the individual verses the community or traditions. As moral authority is based upon individual rational thought, traditional forms of authority are diminished. As the reliance upon rational thought and empirical evidence gets placed at the foreground, traditional ways of knowing and understanding moral thought that typically embrace the environment as having worth are placed in the background. “This view of the rational process, in being based on a competitive model that locates the authority in the rational process of individuals, rejects
tacit and more contextually grounded forms of knowledge" (Bowers, 1993, p. 28).

Typically, these “tacit and more contextually grounded forms of knowledge” position the environment as a living entity, one with value and worth beyond what it can provide for human use. As high-profile theories are utilized at the college level, their intended effect is to teach identity and moral development, yet an unintended result is the conveyance of taken-for-granted cultural assumptions that lead to one viewing personal responsibility in light of the autonomous individual frame of mind, a frame of mind that does little to recognize the Earth as sacred. Due to the adoption of this frame of mind, we develop tendencies that mistreat, misuse, and abuse our natural world. Without any traditional ways of knowing, it is the taken-for-granted modernistic assumptions of high-profile theories of psychosocial development that further perpetuate a context-free, rational form of knowing that further displaces us from our natural world and encourage the freedom of being self-directing.

It is this unintended consequence of the double bind, learning to center oneself according to the autonomous individual frame of mind where in which moral authority is located within the individual, that the sense of being interdependent with the larger social and biotic community is undermined (Bowers, 1993, p. 27). The root metaphor of the autonomous individual carries with it Cartesian ideals of being an independent, objective observer of the natural world, one who is separate from it for the purpose of objective observation and human control. Because of this frame of mind, our natural environment is devoid of a higher purpose, divinity, or intimate connection, and it is now viewed in terms of motion and matter. Cultivating a frame of mind that promotes this view of the natural world fuels a sense of separation, disconnect, and disrespect toward it. As the
Western view of nature came to represent exploitation and domination for the purpose of serving individual needs, the pre-modern notion of “man” nature soon disappeared. “Humans and nonhumans (plants, animals, Earth, etc.) are bound together in a shared moral universe” is not the way that our modern world views nature (Bowers, 1993, p. 141). Instead, because of the root metaphor of the autonomous individual and what it represents in terms of self-direction and individual moral authority, individuals understand the Earth to be a repository of goods for human use and exploitation. This ideal further reinforces anthropocentric notions that “the world is to be understood and valued only from the perspective of human needs, interests, and sense of rationality” (Bowers, 1993, p. 28). Privileging autonomous rational human beings above nature serves to foster frames of mind of separation, control, and domination.

The root metaphor of the autonomous individual positions nature “outside” of the individual. We have cultivated this notion as we rationally distance ourselves from the Earth to better understand and control it. In “adopting a position of detached objectivity in an attempt to master nature, we have tended to forget our fundamental connection to the world we observe” (Smith, 1992, p. 26). As we have forgotten our fundamental connection with our natural world, we mistreat it. When we feel no connection to our surrounding biotic community, we disrespect it without adequate consideration of the consequences. In doing these things, we forget that we “remain dependent on soil and air and water for our very existence. These resources, we are now discovering, are inescapably finite. Furthermore, as we damage them, we injure ourselves” (Smith, 1992, p. 26). We are not able to see this because our culturally constructed frames of mind that honor the individual do not allow us to
understand things in terms of the individual, not the individual in connection to a life supporting systems. In accepting this frame of mind, destructive behaviors toward are natural world result.

Understanding the implicit modernistic assumptions in Kohlberg’s third level shed some light on the ways in which we got ourselves into this double bind and how we just might not be able to get out of it if we keep utilizing high-profile theories of development that implicitly reinforce modernistic frames of mind. Stage five, “Social Contract,” is a time when “individuals recognize that rules represent an agreement among many people about appropriate behavior. They recognize that rules are flexible and can be changed if they no longer meet society’s needs” (Ormrod, 2000, p. 99), and the individual comes to terms with the notion that “good is determined by socially agreed-upon standards of individual rights.” The ultimate goal of stage five is the notion of “respecting the dignity of human beings as individual persons.” It is important to note that as one rationally considers and revises moral behaviors based upon their individual values and opinions, it is socially agreed upon that one may not infringe upon another individual’s right to be free and self-directing. The implicit curriculum reinforces individual freedom and autonomous rights by stating that every individual must respect everyone else’s freedom to be an autonomous individual. Again, rationality in this sense is seen as the basis for individual moral authority. “Right” action is essentially a product of individual rationality as based upon personal values and opinions, and others’ have to respect and accept this as being the undeniable right of every individual. Furthermore, nothing in this representation of Kohlberg’s thinking does he suggest that “right” action
or “correct thinking” entails a moral obligation to the natural world, rather the focus remains on the autonomous individual.

Stage six, “Universal Principle Orientation,” is touted as the ability to rationally know what is “right” because it is “right.” Stage six “is ideal in the sense that it entails a point of view that seeks universal applicability of principled moral judgements” (Lapsley, 1996, p. 45). This stage is retained as hypothetical and not reached by most individuals. Moral reasoning within this stage is typically not reached by most individuals because it can, in certain circumstances require the violation of one’s internal drives, individual desires, and own ethical principles to honor correct moral reasoning because it is “rationally the right action.” Adhering to this ideal of relying upon rational thought regarding moral issues void of any relative or subjective disturbances is the hallmark of stage six.

It is at this point that I am left to wonder if the majority of the individuals living on this Earth could internalize and reach this stage of moral development would we not be in the double bind we are currently in? If it is at this stage of moral reasoning that one is able to go beyond their individually driven moral considerations to be free and self-directing and are then able to honor correct moral reasoning because it is “rationally the right action,” perhaps we could see that in terms of our current downtrodden state of environmental disarray, that “right action because it is right,” void of any consideration toward individual gain, would be living sustainably with the natural world. If stage six were not a hypothetical stage that few individuals reached in their lifetime, and the majority of human beings could all reach this level of moral reasoning, would we all be better able to see how the ways we are currently treating our Earth to be “wrong” and
problematic? If more people were able to rationally reason at this stage, could they see
that genuine “right action” is taking care of our Earth because it is the “right” thing to do?

According to Lapsley (1996):

Stage six can tell us what is moral, but it can not tell us why we should act morally. Working out the ultimate justifications for our moral commitments may well entail an appeal to theistic or other appropriately cosmic considerations. Identifying with God or with vast rhythms of nature or seeing the self as one with being or with the universe- seeing oneself in union with a cause larger than oneself- might be a way of grounding the ultimate significance or one’s life. (p. 90)

Lapsley goes on to suggest a “seventh stage” of moral reasoning where “principles of justice are seen as being in harmony with the broader cosmic order rather than arbitrary human concerns” (p. 90). I argue that it would be at this stage of moral reasoning that humans would understand the necessity of taking care of the natural world because it is “right” without any consideration to their autonomous individual concerns for material gain because they see oneself in union with a cause larger than themselves. It is only in having the masses reach this hypothetical stage of moral reasoning that the double bind we are currently in would cease to exit. I believe this to be the case because it is at stage seven that humans are not considered to be autonomous individuals looking out for the betterment of self; rather they identify with the vast rhythms of nature and see themselves as one with and connected to the universe.

Erikson’s and Kohlberg’s stage theories of development both implicitly reinforce a view of humans as autonomous individuals from birth. As one is born, one is gradually inducted into our modernistic society where in which they are socialized, both explicitly and implicitly, to believe that by their very nature they are autonomous, individualistic, and self-directing. Socializing the members of our society to embrace this modernistic ideal in every single stage of their development from birth to death provides little
opportunity to allow one the possibility of ever being able to step away from this frame of mind and reason morally in stage six where the individual violates their own internal desires and is able to even consider what “right” action is separate from themselves. Stage six and stage seven are theoretically impossible to reach because the all the previous stages reinforce a frame of mind that does not allow for moral reasoning outside of individualistic terms. Because the implicit curriculum of high-profile theories of psychosocial development constantly reinforce the autonomous individual frame of mind at every stage of development, being able to rationally see that “right” action entails treating the natural world in sustainable ways is not possible because being able to do so would require one to have cultivated a frame of mind that considers a human connection to something bigger than oneself. Our current frame of mind of autonomous individualism as molded by this implicit curriculum does not allow us to perceive our relationship with the natural world in this way. How can we ever expect humans to honor the essential connection to our natural world, if from birth we have only been taught how to be autonomous individuals?

Conclusion

As this paper concludes its demonstration of how implicit modernistic assumptions embedded within high-profile theories of identity development influence the mature members of our society, primarily teachers, to think about the developing identities and moral responsibilities of human beings as autonomous individuals that engage in a non-participatory relationship with the social and environmental communities, it is important to be mindful that as aspiring teachers assume these taken-for-granted assumptions, they unknowingly further individualistic behaviors not only in themselves but in their students as well. Continuing along
this line of thinking, as students are perceived as being autonomous individuals, they in turn adopt these implicit cultural assumptions and act accordingly. As high-profile theories of development are reinforced in teacher preparatory programs to teach identity and moral development, there is an inadvertent, multifaceted side effect. The side effect is the implicit conveyance of taken-for-granted modernistic assumptions that shape aspiring teachers’ frames of minds to think about and perceive human development in terms of the rational, autonomous, and morally self-directing individual that in turn reinforces the autonomous individual frame of mind. And this frame of mind perpetuates ecologically destructive behaviors on the part of human beings. Thus, the more we reinforce these high-profile theories, in effect the more we perpetuate cultural ways of knowing that are harmful to the natural world. And, our autonomous individual frame of mind holds the pinnacle of all individual and moral development to be the respect for the dignity of humans to be individual beings free from self-limiting restrictions. As this frame of mind discourages us from seeing the interconnected nature of our relationship with the natural world, we alienate ourselves from the greater biotic system that surrounds us, and without our awareness, the system fails.

It is essential to the preservation of our Earth that we humans come to realize that we “are nested in cultural systems, and cultural systems are nested in natural systems” (Bowers, 1997, p. viii). Illuminating the implicit curriculum of high-profile theories of development advances the understanding of how our frames of mind and ways of seeing the world are influenced by cultural metaphors that are inherently modernistic. Understanding that cultural metaphors implicitly influence the ways in which we view the natural world better aids us in coming to understand how our current state of mind,
that of the autonomous individual, does little to preserve and honor our natural systems.

Bowers (1997) goes on to note:

We are cultural beings and give varying degrees of personalized expressions to these shared cultural patterns. We are also dependent upon our environment for both the chemical exchange that sustain human life and the physical reference points that are the basis of our symbolic systems. (p. ix)

The implicit curriculum of high-status theories of psychosocial development does little to encourage the frame of mind that we are dependent upon or interrelated to our natural world. Understanding this, there is a desperate need to revise our current modernistic metaphor of the autonomous individual to that of a “participant in an interdependent ecological system” (Bowers, 1993, p. 81).

It is not enough to be simply to aware of these culturally influenced frames of mind that do little to establish an interconnected relationship with the natural world. I believe that further steps are to be taken if we truly want to re-educate humankind to be participants in rather than observers of this complex interrelated web of life. “Ultimately, then, the ecological crisis concerns how we think and the institutions that purport to shape and refine the capacity to think” (Orr, 2004, p.2). How we think and the refinement of the capacity to think requires a greater consciousness about the ways in which language, models, and theories alienate us from our subject matter (Orr, 2004, p. 46), and I believe, how this knowledge alienates us from ourselves. In thinking about what comes next, that is after identifying the problematic nature of reinforcing an autonomous individual frame of mind that serves to distance one from the natural world, I am left to contemplate what we, educators and educational institutions, need to do about it. My first suggestion is the sincere acknowledgement by all educators that “all education is
environmental education" (Orr, 2004, p. 12). If institutions, authors of educational text
books, and teachers embrace this fundamental notion, culturally created implicit
assumptions that prove to be harmful the natural world would perhaps be better
illuminated, acknowledged, and confronted.

Our history has demonstrated that cultural issues which have served to diminish
the well-being of society have been successfully brought to the forefront of one’s
consciousness for the purpose of awareness and change, and current textbooks draw
attention to such issues. For example, in Educational Psychology, by Anita Woolfolk
(1993), immediately following the presentation of Kohlberg’s theory of moral
development is a section that illuminates “alternatives to Kohlberg’s theory.” Contained
in this section are several criticisms of Kohlberg’s work. One criticism of Kohlberg’s
stage theory “is that stages five and six in moral reasoning are biased in favor of Western,
males values that emphasize individualism” (p. 82). This section goes on to illuminate the
well deserved point that other cultures that are more family centered or group orientated,
“the highest moral value might involve putting the opinions of the group before decisions
based on individual conscience” (p. 82). The presence of this critical section of this text
demonstrates the author’s ability to not only recognize inherent culturally biased frames
of mind of the Western individual but acknowledge the fact that they deserve to be made
explicit.

A second example of the text’s illumination of cultural undertones that may
otherwise go unnoticed to be the “hotly debated” criticisms of Kohlberg’s theory and its
biased favor toward male moral reasoning. The text goes on to state that “some
psychologists have claimed that Kohlberg’s theory is biased toward women” because it
relies on principles that privilege traditional “male” characteristics of universal justice and fairness (p. 82). Other criticisms represent the fact that inherent in Kohlberg’s theory is the notion that men progressed to the highest stages of moral reasoning, stages five and six, while it is implied that women only reason at the third level of his stage theory. Inherent in Kohlberg’s earlier studies is that “women are moral midgets . . . and that it is very possible that the moral reasoning of women and the stages of women’s development are not adequately represented” (Woolfolk, 1993, p. 82).

As Orr (2004) points out, “education is no guarantee of decency, prudence or wisdom. More of the same kind of education will only compound our problems” (p.8). If the textbook authors are aware of this fact, thus include criticisms of high-profile theories to counter the potentially destructive act of perpetuating culturally biased frames of mind, I believe that a section including the criticisms regarding the taken-for-granted cultural assumptions that privilege detachment from the natural world, autonomous individualism, and anthropocentricism to be in order. If one can draw attention to criticisms that illuminate the predominant Western ideology of individualism and unequal sex differences in moral reasoning, why can’t there be a section designated for environmental criticisms? As Orr (2004) states, “the truth is that without significant precautions, education can equip people merely to be more effective vandals of the earth” (p. 5). Without explicitly bringing to the foreground of peoples’ consciousness the ecological double bind inherent in privileging a modernistic frame of mind that furthers a sense of detachment from and domination over the Earth, people will become more effective vandals of the earth and not have any awareness of their doing so.
The implicit curriculum of high-profile theories of psychosocial development socializes future educators to think about the nature of human beings as autonomous individuals. Unless this frame of mind is brought to the forefront of our consciousness, "there will be an unending series of environmental problems that will keep attention focused on the immediate consequences of these cultural beliefs and practices, and not on the source of the problem" (Bowers, 1997, p. 18). The source of the problem being the double bind that is created as a result of the continued socialization of our future educators in modernistic root metaphors that honor and embrace the autonomous individual frame of mind.
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