Caring for consequences listening to voices: Understanding application and suggestions for environmental justice in the public schools

Kira Elizabeth Sherwood

The University of Montana

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CARING FOR CONSEQUENCES, LISTENING TO VOICES:
UNDERSTANDING, APPLICATION AND SUGGESTIONS
FOR ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE IN THE
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

by
Kira Elizabeth Sherwood
presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Master of Science
The University of Montana
1998

Approved by

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Chairperson
Dean, Graduate School

Date
12-11-98
The purpose of this research was to gain ideas for and identify barriers to implementing environmental justice (EJ) education in public high schools. This was done by interviewing students, teachers, administrators and parents at two public high schools in western Montana, Hellgate High School in Missoula, MT and St. Ignatius High School in St. Ignatius, MT. A participatory research model was used, in which the researcher worked in partnership with participants to identify pertinent EJ issues and successful methods of teaching them; the research reflected a commitment to social change and empowerment.

Interviewees were asked open-ended questions which related to three categories: their understanding of environmental justice and related terms, current application of environmental justice education in their school, and suggestions and/or concerns they had about teaching environmental justice. Responses were analyzed for emergent themes within populations and/or schools.

Several themes emerged. Understanding varied among schools and populations. Hellgate's population demonstrated a more sophisticated understanding of EJ, but St. Ignatius interviewees were better able to apply EJ to local or personal examples. A majority of Native American interviewees, and non-Natives who labeled themselves "spiritual," gave more comprehensive definitions of EJ and gave a stronger critique of American culture. In the area of application of EJ and related ideas, many interviewees were concerned with preparing students for a fast-paced world, but few felt that they could empower students to change that world. Both schools were willing to teach students social skills and values, including those associated with social and environmental justice.

Suggestions and goals were similar for all groups. The goals interviewees saw for EJ education included the environmental education ideas of awareness, empathy and action. Interviewees listed activities which were community-oriented and those which fostered critical thinking as important to successful EJ education.

Links between schools and communities, the social atmosphere and values of the school, and Paulo Friere's ideas of critical pedagogy - which empowers "oppressed" community members to look critically at their situation and take action for change - were identified as central to teaching EJ. Teacher trainings were identified as a logical next step.
PREFACE: A JOURNEY BEGINS

I began this Master’s thesis because I believe that the natural world and groups of people considered “expendable” in our society (such as minorities and the poor) are the victims of the same attitude and situation: their beauty and integrity are being destroyed, whether knowingly or unknowingly, in the name of technological and social progress. In fact, their very existence is threatened by current social, economic and political systems. And I believe that the majority of our youth – as most citizens – have not grappled with these issues on a level that would allow them to internalize them or take action to change them.¹ As an educator and an activist, I began to ask – is it possible to begin teaching about the link between social and environmental degradation (commonly referred to as environmental justice or EJ) in public schools? Have the school communities ever considered EJ, and if so, how is it taught now and how could its teaching be expanded? Accordingly, I contacted two schools with three general questions in mind: What is the current understanding of EJ in the school community? Is it taught now, and if so in what context and how? What suggestions do people have for expanding its teaching, and what concerns?

Hoping to delve deeply into these questions, rather than do a more comprehensive but less probing survey, I chose two public high schools in western Montana for my research: Hellgate High School in downtown Missoula, and St. Ignatius High School in the Flathead Reservation town of St. Ignatius. Over a three-month period, I interviewed more than 60 students, teachers, administrators and parents at the two schools. I used a qualitative, participatory research approach which allowed me to talk in-depth with participants and find common themes among their ideas and concerns. The conversations were, almost without exception, quite remarkable. Members of the school communities opened their hearts to me, and our conversations ranged from the frustrations of planning field trips, to

¹For a defense of this, see for example Orr 1992 and Orr 1994
the differences between Missoula and urban California schools, to the need to foster true vision in students. Although it often meant long interviews, I allowed my subjects to speak about whatever they felt most strongly about; I did not want to risk losing important insights by imposing my agenda on our conversation too soon. Many of them later apologized for “rambling” or “skipping around,” but I believe these diversions helped me to see more deeply into the school communities.

And so I came away with more, and less, than I set out to find. I certainly do not feel that I now know enough to design a brilliantly successful EJ curriculum. My lens was simply not broad enough for that near-impossible task, nor could a single curriculum work without serious commitment and dedication on the part of schools. However, I do feel that I was allowed to bring my ideas of environmental discrimination and EJ into the hallways, libraries and classrooms of these dynamic and special schools, and to begin to think collaboratively with them about how to make environmental justice part of their consciousness.

I hope that I have done them justice here.
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am indebted to my thesis committee members, Fletcher Brown (chair), Janet Finn, Tom Roy, and Stephanie Wasta, for their insight and guidance during the duration of this research. Fletcher and Janet were particularly helpful in commenting on early drafts of my thesis. The support of my committee has made this a much stronger, more concise, and more powerful work than it would otherwise have been.

My research would not have been possible without the welcome I received from the administrations of Hellgate High School or St. Ignatius High School. In particular, I want to thank Doug Deason, the principal of Hellgate, for his rigorous attention to my project and his ability to look deeply at my research. I also want to thank St. Ignatius' principal, Tim Skinner, for his openness and willingness to share his philosophy with me. And I want to acknowledge the generosity and open-heartedness of Jennifer Copley and Alice Norton, my host teachers at Hellgate and St. Ignatius, respectively. Both of these women dedicated valuable time to helping me find appropriate interviewees and making sure that the time I spent at each school was valuable and productive. Their guidance made a huge difference in the quality of my research time.

Finally, the crux of my research is, of course, the participants themselves. I am overwhelmed by the generosity of spirit that my interviewees demonstrated, taking sometimes as long as an hour or two to share their thoughts and ideas with me. I want to particularly acknowledge two interviewees who must remain anonymous, but whose comments and suggestions were critical to having me remember the ultimate goal of my research: to foster true vision, empowerment, and a sense of community in the young people of this country.
CHAPTER ONE: MAPPING THE TERRAIN

What are the things that I'm very aware of knowing myself and very aware that my interviewees don't know? For them, issues of EJ are isolated: the pipeline, the TV special about a poor town in Mississippi. For me, they are a web that crisscrosses every choice we make, from what to have for dinner to whether to go research today, because I have been immersed in this so long.

Research journal, 3/5/98

My research is intended to assess the current place of environmental justice in public high school education, as well as to solicit ideas for expanding EJ education. A background understanding of EJ is therefore critical, as is an understanding of the ways in which it and other environmental and social justice issues have been approached in education. In this section I summarize the environmental justice movement and its relationship to education. I also discuss the discipline of critical pedagogy, which engages oppressed people (students and otherwise) in critically examining the structure of their society, and I summarize the work of those few organizations which have begun to systematically insert EJ issues into education. These ideas are the foundation on which my own research builds.

Introduction: The Environmental Justice Movement and the Future of Education

Ask any American high school student, and she could probably tell you the main priorities of this country's environmental movement: wilderness preservation, recycling (a big push in schools because it's relatively easy to implement), perhaps clean air and water\(^1\). She would most likely define "environment" as the natural world, preferably those parts of it relatively untouched by human beings. And she might be able to tell you

\(^1\)See Project WILD (WREEC 1992) as an example of a well-known curriculum that deals with these types of issues.
something of the history that led to those priorities: John Muir's love of wilderness around the turn of the century, Aldo Leopold's 1940s land ethic, Rachel Carson's stand against pesticides in the 1960s which turned the focus of national environmental groups more towards human health.

But she could tell you little or nothing about a more recent environmental movement in America, one that defines "environment" as a city playground as well as a national park, and looks not only what is poisoning people, but where, and whom. Although its roots go back over a century, the environmental justice movement (EJM) coalesced in America in the mid-1970s as residents of communities who felt they were being poisoned by environmental hazards began to actively oppose that poisoning. They used a discourse of prejudice or injustice, claiming that they were singled out because they were people of color or low-income people. Almost entirely grassroots in origin, the movement gained momentum and national press for its struggles in the 1980s, culminating in 1987 when the United Church of Christ released a report showing that "race [is] the most significant among variables tested in association with the location of commercial hazardous waste facilities" (United Church of Christ, 1987). Similar studies have been completed since that time, some corroborating the UCC's findings and others challenging them. In 1990, a regional EJ group called the Southwest Organizing Project held a national People of Color Leadership Summit, which adopted 17 "Principles of Environmental Justice" (People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit 1991). These Principles summarized the philosophy of the EJ movement, and included affirmations of the interdependence of all life, as well as statements of human rights to clean air and water, safe jobs and housing, and other necessities. In the years since, EJM has become a strong organizing framework, particularly in inner cities, poor towns and on Indian reservations.

See, for example, Cutter 1996.
The Principles are reprinted in their entirety in Appendix 4.
Three definitions are useful in conceiving of environmental justice. The first is environmental racism, which activist and writer Bunyan Bryant says is “an extension of racism,” and “refers to those institutional rules, regulations, and policies or government or corporate decisions that deliberately target certain communities for least desirable land uses, resulting in the disproportionate exposure of toxic and hazardous waste on communities based upon certain prescribed biological characteristics.” Although Bryant does not explicitly do so, one could also consider forms of environmental discrimination based on factors besides race, such as income level, social class, age, or gender. The second definition, environmental equity, is seen by Bryant as a short-term solution to environmental discrimination; it “refers to the equal protection of environmental laws... regardless of the racial and economic composition of the community.” The final distinction, environmental justice, is “broader in scope” than equity. “It refers to those cultural norms and values, rules, regulations, behaviors, policies, and decisions to support sustainable communities... Environmental justice is served when people can realize their highest potential, without experiencing the ‘isms’” (Bryant 1995, p.5-6). In other words, where environmental equity asks whether toxic waste is equally distributed to black and white neighborhoods, environmental justice envisions a world without toxic waste.

Those who become EJ activists generally move through these three stages of activism: from the recognition that they are discriminated against, to a demand for equal treatment, to broader questions about their society. According to EJ activists and writers, victims of environmental injustice initially have little understanding of the dangers they face. They may notice high rates of illness in their neighborhood, as residents of Love Canal did in the 1970s. They are probably aware that they live in a “bad” section of town, often near industry or waste dumps. In many cases, however, they are unaware that their neighborhood is contaminated, and they may not see connections among their illnesses or discuss concerns with their neighbors. In reservation settings, tribal leaders
may initially see a business opportunity through timber harvesting or accepting radioactive waste, without realizing the damage it will do to land and people. Only gradually do those affected come to understand that their well-being is threatened, and once they do, they have a difficult time getting their grievances addressed within established channels. They perceive that the dangers they face are due to factors such as economic status or race. They therefore are “likely to frame their demands in terms of social justice and to challenge stratification based on race, class, gender and the distribution of power,” (Capek 1993). This is, of course, an unpopular position among government and business organizations that are invested in the status quo.

For instance, Stella Capek describes the plight of the residents of Texarkana (which straddles the Texas/Arkansas border) to be relocated from a neighborhood above a Superfund site. Neighbors began to notice a pattern of illness in their neighborhood and attempted to address this with the multinational company which had contaminated the site. Their demands included the right to information about the problem, the right to a fair hearing, and the right to be compensated for leaving the contaminated area. But when residents voiced these demands, they were systematically misled about the dangers they faced, denied information, or told that they were “hysterical” or had no scientific proof that their neighborhood was dangerous (Capek 1993). Like other EJ activists, Texarkana residents soon learned that “laws, social norms, and the language of expertise [limit] less powerful groups’ access to data needed for informed social action” (Finn 1994).

Some budding activists simply give up in the face of this resistance, but others continue to protest their situation through legal battles or direct action. At this point, their demands are usually in the category of environmental equity: they want equal treatment under the law, and an equal opportunity to achieve “the American dream” without being poisoned. Texarkana’s residents, for instance, were primarily African-Americans owning their own homes for the first time. Gradually, however, many activists come to
understand that the problem is bigger than their own community. A society which produces as much toxic waste as America requires that some people live in proximity to it. While some activists might be satisfied when a facility is relocated out of their neighborhood, others recognize that another neighborhood will then face the same dangers. These people move from demands for environmental equity to ideas of environmental justice, and they begin to strongly critique American consumerism. They realize that the American dream – that anyone can prosper if they try hard enough – is a myth. It requires that some people bear the toxic burdens brought on by the relentless consumerism of others.

Most EJ activists arise in communities that are victims of environmental injustice, which would indicate that they are poor communities without a great deal of political clout. Many organizers, therefore, do not begin with expertise in organizing or fighting legal battles. Yet they have few resources to turn to in training them to be effective and have their message heard. For example, the mainstream environmental movement, which is a logical forum for EJ issues, has been a weak ally to environmental justice workers (Taylor 1996, Sierra 1993). EJM activists allege that more mainstream environmentalism – as exemplified, for instance, by the National Wildlife Federation or the Sierra Club – is actually exacerbating environmental injustice by ignoring issues pertinent to people of color. They charge that mainstream groups are too “white” in their membership, their leadership and their focus. They allege that these groups spend their time on grizzly habitat or rainforest protection, while ignoring the protection of safe habitat for inner-city or indigenous human beings. EJM calls for a focus on the social justice aspect of environmental problems; it asks people to look at the ways in which damaging the environment also damages communities, and puts priority on the safe living and working spaces of marginalized people. According to Dorceta Taylor, a prominent EJ writer and activist, “EJ activists have inserted issues of power, domination, racism, discrimination, distribution of risks and benefits, inequality and justice into the debate, agenda and
educational process" of environmentalism (Taylor 1996). This is, of course, not always welcome to the primarily white and upper-middle-class constituents of the mainstream environmental movement. Taylor acknowledges that "many people brought up with traditional definitions and boundaries of the environment and environmentalism are not comfortable with the linkages of racism, classism, sexism and environmentalism."

EJ activists have had, and will no doubt continue to have, an even more difficult time getting their voices heard in arenas which do not already have an environmental or social justice focus. They cannot possibly compete with the messages in American culture, both subtle and blatant, which lull people into believing that all is well and no one is treated unjustly unless they deserve it. In particular, public schools, which claim to be neutral and democratic arenas of learning, have not dealt systematically with environmental justice or other social justice issues. There is a dearth of curriculum materials and teacher training programs on EJ, and even a journal issue devoted solely to environmental justice education (Race, Poverty and the Environment Winter/Spring 1996) highlighted only two programs geared towards public schools. Although issues which would fit into an EJ frame are taught by some teachers, there is no published evidence for a sustained effort in most communities to expose students to issues of environmental justice. In many cases this is likely because issues are seen as biased or too controversial. Yet the result is that America’s public schools “fail to challenge the ways in which the educational curricula correspond to the demands of industry or the means by which schooling reproduces existing race, class and gender relations in our society” (MacClaren 1994). By leaving out the voices of EJ and other activists, schools perpetuate a bias against those who are already discriminated against.

4It should be mentioned that, although no national organization explicitly calls itself an environmental justice organization, several national groups do EJ-related campaigns. Among these are Greenpeace and Citizen’s Clearinghouse for Hazardous Waste.
Critical Pedagogy

For environmental justice to be successfully incorporated into education, it needs to be done within a framework which honors and empowers all students, particularly those who are victims of environmental and other forms of discrimination. Although not widely practiced in America's public schools, such a framework does exist, in the discipline of critical pedagogy (CP).

Critical pedagogy was first articulated by the Brazilian social scientist Paulo Friere, who worked with peasants to empower them to change oppressive social structures. Rather than dictating an agenda for his research and attempting to be a neutral observer, as most social scientists of the time did, Friere actively engaged his subjects in thinking about issues important to their lives. "It is not our role to speak to the people about our own view of the world, nor to attempt to impose that view on them," Friere explained in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1995), "but rather to dialogue with the people about their view and ours." Friere's idea was a radical one: even poor peasants, usually considered uneducated and stupid by the higher classes, can be empowered to think critically and take action about the causes of their social situation.

Friere frames his thinking in terms of an oppressor/oppressed dichotomy: the people he works with are somehow oppressed by another class of people and/or by the social framework they all inhabit. His approach is to see the oppressed not as objects of a policy or framework, but as subjects able to act powerfully in their lives through critical dialogue. "If at a certain historical moment the oppressed... are unable to fulfill their vocation as Subjects, the posing of their very oppression as a problem... will help them achieve this vocation," he states (Friere 1995). Friere's approach begins with this "posing of oppression as a problem," and he sees dialogue with the oppressed as an act of creation, of "profound love for the world and for men" (Friere 1995) - a reverent, even spiritual view. Once this dialogue has begun, he says, people will begin to see the inherent contradictions in their lives, between the myths about their society and the
realities of their day-to-day lives. The oppressed then choose certain of these contradictions to focus on, both critically reflecting on them and taking action where appropriate. (Friere points out that “action and reflection must occur simultaneously, but that critical reflection can itself be a form of action.”) Finally, they begin to synthesize their reflection into “generative themes,” which are themes or threads that tie together their collective experience.

Friere discusses at length the idea of the “oppressor within”: that part of an oppressed person which genuinely believes that he or she is inferior and deserves to be oppressed, or sometimes that he/she is not actually oppressed. The “oppressor within” is similar in some ways to environmental equity, saying that the oppressed should have the same rights and privileges as the oppressor, but not critically challenging the structure of the oppressor/oppressed system. In other words, according to Friere, the oppressors manipulate by “inoculat[ing] individuals with the bourgeois appetite for personal success,” without giving those individuals the opportunity to challenge that model of success, which requires that someone be the oppressed.

Although Friere’s ideas were developed among Brazilian peasants, his critical pedagogy has since been applied successfully to American public school students, asking students of all races and classes to critically examine the contradictions of their society. American critical pedagogists such as Henry Giroux (1988), Michael Apple (1982), Peter MacClaren (1994), and bell hooks (1994) have pointed out the ways in which American students are oppressed by a school system and larger society that does not encourage them to think critically. According to Giroux, public schooling “at best... offers limited individual mobility to members of the working class and other oppressed groups, but it is a powerful instrument for the reproduction of capitalist relations of production and the dominant legitimizing ideologies of ruling groups” (Giroux 1988, p. xxx). Lower-class students are given the message that the dominant social order is essentially unchangeable and that “their subordinate roles in the social order are justified and inviolable”
This is done in many ways. One is through curriculum that reinforces dominant values or, at best, talks about resolving cultural differences through methods considered acceptable by the dominant culture, like consensus and compromise (Giroux 1988, p.96). Another is by making teachers into “technicians,” responsible for delivering canned material and “keeping the lid on” what would be an otherwise “disruptive” class (Giroux 1988, p.94). According to MacClaren, as a new teacher in an inner-city elementary school he had no theoretical support for empowering his students: “It has occurred to me that educators are rarely encouraged to seek connections that would link their personal brand of pedagogy to wider social processes, structures, and issues” (MacClaren 1994, p. xvi). Schools are not a place where students can “conduct meaningful dialogues about serious social issues;” indeed, this is actively discouraged by most schools as too dangerous or controversial (Anthony 1996). Instead, lower-class students have values reinforced which will help them be obedient lower-class workers: be on time, don’t interrupt, do what is asked of you, don’t challenge the authority figure. Meanwhile, more upper-class youth are encouraged to take high-level courses and prepare for leadership.

Critical theorists propose a new model of education, one which has as its goal “preparing all students to be active, critical, and risk-taking citizens” (Giroux 1988, p x) rather than reinforcing existing social norms. Like Friere’s work, this process begins with critical dialogue between students and teachers, taking the problems and needs of the students as a starting point for empowerment (MacClaren 1994, p.223). It affirms the life experiences and stories of all students, whether or not they fit a dominant pattern of what is expected or appropriate in schools5. It acknowledges the validity of everyone’s voice,6 and then moves on to a critical consideration of power relationships and the

5This is not meant to imply that seriously disruptive or dangerous behavior is embraced. However, critical pedagogy does require practitioners to take seriously these expressions of self and culture, rather than simply attempting to rid the student and classroom of them.
6This concept of “voice” is articulated more fully in Giroux’s work and in MacClaren’s Life in Schools. MacClaren elucidates Giroux’s idea of “voice” as a “multifaceted and interlocking
structure of society. This leads to empowerment, an “invitation to reconstruct society,” (Friere 1995, p157), to emancipate the oppressed rather than training them to adjust to a dominant paradigm. As Giroux states, “Public schools need to be organized around a vision that celebrates not what is but what could be, a vision that looks beyond the immediate to the future, and a vision that links struggle to a new set of human possibilities” (Giroux 1988, p10). Students are asked to actively envision a transformed world in which oppression no longer exists. This is, of course, a radical and frightening notion to many schools, who are – implicitly or explicitly – more interested in preparing students for the status quo than in encouraging what they see as revolutionary ideas and disruptive behavior.

The ideas of critical pedagogy are absolutely integral to my work. In my research design and in my questioning, I wanted my subjects to think critically about environmental justice and its implications for the social structure around them. Although I did have an agenda – I was clear that EJ was a concern of mine – I did not impose it on my subjects; rather, I wanted to hear their ideas and engage in a critical dialogue about how to teach EJ to students in an emancipatory way. I approached my subjects as critical thinkers, and asked probing questions that encouraged them to think about the inherent contradictions in society. I also saw critical pedagogy as a tool in the classroom for creating effective EJ education; it provides a framework which allows students to begin envisioning and working towards an environmentally just world.

Environmental Education and Multicultural Education

Although environmental justice has rarely been included in public school education, education about environmental issues has been a part of many curricula for years. Environmental education (EE) emerged as a distinct field in the 1970s, and it arguably has four main goals: awareness/appreciation of nature, knowledge about the natural set of meanings through which students and teachers actively engage in dialogue with one another.” (MacClaren 1994, p226)
world and humans' relationship to it, attitude shifts which cause students to be more environmentally responsible (this is one of the more controversial pieces of EE), and action, such as a community project or letter-writing campaign on behalf of the environment\textsuperscript{7}. EE curricula are varied and prolific, including everything from state-sponsored EE mandates to booklets published by corporations. Many are specific to one issue, such as solid waste or wetland preservation. A typical example of a comprehensive EE curriculum is Project W.I.L.D., a Western Regional Environmental Education Council publication which describes itself as “an interdisciplinary, supplementary conservation and environmental education program for educators of kindergarten through high school age young people” (WREEC 1987). The book is intended as a supplement to existing courses and subjects, and includes stand-alone activities which are arranged roughly by the categories listed above for EE. Teachers are required to attend a full-day training before they use the book. Activities are fairly easy to follow and include ideas for evaluating students. Many deal with natural history or human effects on ecosystems, as well as basic ecology. For instance, an activity in Project WILD Aquatic called “Turtle Hurdles” includes background information about turtle ecology and life cycles and human threats to turtle reproduction: predation of eggs, crushing of eggs by dune buggies, and trawlers which accidentally net turtles. Then students play a game which simulates turtle reproduction: some students pretend to be turtles and must avoid “limiting factors” in the form of other students who are predators, trawlers or pollution. The objectives listed are: “1) describe the life cycle of sea turtles, 2) identify specific mortality factors related to sea turtles, 3) make inferences about the effects of limiting factors on sea turtle populations; and 4) make recommendations for ways to minimize the factors which contribute to the possible extinction of sea turtles” (WREEC 1992). In other words, students become aware of the issue, acquire

\textsuperscript{7}Similar goals were generated by representatives of more than 60 nations at a conference in Tblisi, Georgia in 1977. See UNESCO, 1977. For a discussion, see Braus and Wood, 1993.
knowledge about it, are taught (implicitly) that sea turtles should not be driven extinct, and are asked to think about actions to mitigate the dangers to turtles.

Missing from Project W.I.L.D. – and almost all available EE curricula – is critical pedagogy. Though students are taught the structure of the natural world and something of their role in it, they are rarely asked to critically examine the social systems and assumptions which underlie environmental problems. They are told that laws like the Endangered Species Act and technologies like turtle-safe trawlers will protect turtles and are worth supporting. They are asked “What specific recommendations would . . . increase the successful reproduction and survival of sea turtles?” But the activity does not explicitly explore overpopulation, development in coastal zones, or the human attitude that puts people’s wants above the needs of other species.

A similar critique applies to the field of multicultural education (ME). Growing out of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, ME calls itself “a field committed to educate and prepare all students successfully for an increasingly diverse – and frequently conflict-filled – world” (Running-Grass 1996). It has three main purposes: to celebrate diversity, encourage cooperation and understanding among people of different cultures, and address how to effectively teach students from different cultural backgrounds. In the first two categories, Giroux criticizes such curricula for painting a picture of a “happy and co-operative” class and world, but one which “lacks any sense of culture as a terrain of struggle; moreover, it does not pay any attention to the relationship between knowledge and power” (Giroux 1988, p97). In other words, its celebration of diversity is far too simplistic; it does not acknowledge or address the real differences in cultural norms, or legitimize any but the dominant. In the second case, similarly, the context is still on traditional or dominant ideas about teaching. The curricula may help teachers to relate to students from different backgrounds, but according to critical theorists, they do not encourage teachers to consider those students’ cultural norms and expectations as cause for radically critiquing the American school system or society.
Some multicultural education programs have incorporated critical pedagogy and related ideas. Sonia Nieto, a multicultural educator and theorist, defines ME as (among other things) education for social justice, and says that "because it uses critical pedagogy as its underlying philosophy and focuses on knowledge, reflection, and action (praxis) as the basis for social change, multicultural education furthers the democratic principles of social justice" (Nieto 1992, p208). Like Giroux, Nieto criticizes ME which "deal[s] wholly with the cultural distinctiveness of various groups and little more" (Nieto 1992, p209). Nieto's and others' efforts to make ME more meaningful by grounding it in critical pedagogy are an important foundation for EJ education, but they are still very much in the minority in the field of ME.

**Multicultural Environmental Education**

There has been one attempt to bring critical pedagogy and EJ to EE and ME. Running-Grass, a long-time environmental educator and EJ activist, founded the Three Circles Center for Multicultural Environmental Education in 1991. Three Circles Center (TCC) has as its purpose “to introduce, encourage and cultivate multicultural and environmental justice perspectives and values in environmental and outdoor education, recreation and interpretation” (Running-Grass 1996, p.2). Working both with traditional educators and EJ activists, TCC sees itself as working at the intersection of the three circles of ecology, culture and community. It integrates multicultural education, environmental education, environmental justice, and critical pedagogy. As an example, the XCEL (Cross-Cultural Environmental Leadership) Program at San Rafael High School in California involves a diverse group of youth in thinking about environmental justice issues. One group of participants spent time on a natural preserve, then visited a corporate farm in Salinas, followed by a United Farm Worker’s office. In addition to more traditional EE experiences on the preserve, the youth were educated firsthand about the social and environmental effects of these large corporations – low wages and no
workers' rights for immigrant farm workers, as well as pesticide exposure and soil depletion in the area. The high school student writing about the program concluded by saying that "it's the job of the XCELers to go into their communities and try to make changes. For the environmental movement to become more powerful, it needs to embrace the youth and people of many diverse cultures" (Seligson 1996, p.44). By combining ME and EE with environmental justice issues, and adopting a critical pedagogical approach to this education, MEE has the potential to be a powerful framework for EJ education. In fact, while I use the phrase "environmental justice education" in this research for clarity with my subjects, my own vision of EJ education includes all of the components addressed by Running-Grass and MEE and is more properly considered multicultural environmental education.

Other Environmental Justice Education

The Three Circles Center is the only well-known organization in America which is devoted to improving and expanding environmental justice education. It is not, however, the only place where EJ education is being pursued. Around the country, community EJ activists are involving youth in their struggles, and many of these efforts are probably unknown to the wider public. One well-publicized example of a successful EJ education program is REEP, the Roxbury Environmental Empowerment Project. Roxbury is a poor section of Boston, long infamous in that city for its poverty and crime. In the late 1980s, Roxbury residents organized to improve the neighborhood that was their environment. They formed the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative and used eminent domain laws to condemn and then rebuild ten city blocks of their community. In 1995, the Boston-area environmental justice organization Alternatives for Community and Environment (ACE) formed a core group which began making REEP presentations to local principals and teachers. Developing curriculum as they went along, REEP volunteers explored students' concepts of environment and justice and developed mock
debates and other activities to help students understand the political process of activism. REEP's goal was and is "to immediately apply basic environmental, legal, health and economic information to specific examples that are relevant to what's happening in Roxbury" (Henry 1996, p29). In other words, the purpose of this curriculum is to give specific and practical information to students in a community which faces injustice – an important task as part of Roxbury's fight for environmental justice. But REEP does not in any way try to address systematic EJ education; its focus is specifically on Roxbury's issues.

Although less well-known, other communities have no doubt undertaken similar projects to bring EJ into their own schools. Apart from the Three Circles Center, however, there has been no sustained attempt to make EJ education a priority for all public schools. Other programs, like REEP, have been locally specific and generated by community members.

**Personalizing the Journey**

The terrain on which I carried out my research includes not only the foundation described above, but also many of my own personal landmarks – experiences I had or ideas I encountered that have profoundly shaped my own thinking about the process and goals of EJ education. I include here those ideas and experiences which I have identified as being central to my own approach to environmental justice and to education. It was sometimes necessary, during the course of my research, to temporarily set down these ideas in order to accomplish my goal of hearing my interviewees' perspectives. But these ideas are fundamental to the way I structured my research and to the conclusions I drew from it.
Deep Ecology, Social Ecology and Earth Spirituality

Although seeds had certainly been planted much earlier, my own interest in environmental issues began to germinate during a Deep Ecology (DE) gathering I attended when I was 18. For three days we were asked to think like mountains, move like ancient reptiles, listen to Native American voices, and mourn for the parts of the natural world that have been lost. I came away from the weekend with several lifelong friends and a conviction that I wanted to do environmental work of some kind.

I also had the principles of Deep Ecology – at least as they were articulated and followed by this group of people, which included rainforest activist John Seed and a Lakota Indian activist – as a foundation (not yet critically examined) for my environmental work. As a participant in this workshop, my understanding of DE was that it asked humans to see each other as just one more species in the biosphere, no better or higher than others. It called on people to see themselves in a larger context, an ecological Self that encompassed the whole world, so that John Seed was able to feel when he did direct action that “I was no longer acting on behalf of myself or my human ideas, but on behalf of the Earth ... on behalf of my larger self, that I was literally part of the rainforest defending herself” (Seed et al. 1988, p.6).

Although my own experience of Deep Ecology was personal rather than theoretical, DE as a framework has been discussed academically for many years. It was first articulated by the Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess, who “used the term ‘deep’ to distinguish his sense of a probing, questioning, challenging kind of ecology from the more conventional, apolitical kind ... and the anthropocentric stance of most professional ecologists and environmentalists” (Sale 1988, p.670). His ideas were later expanded by Bill Duvall and George Sessions in their book Deep Ecology (Duvall and Sessions 1985). Briefly, the seven principles of DE that Duvall and Sessions lay out fall into three general categories of ideas. The first is that all life has value independent of human beings, and thus we have no right to reduce its richness except to fulfill vital needs. The
second is that the current global human population is too high to permit the flourishing of the biosphere as a whole. The third, which synthesizes and draws conclusions from the first two, is that human technologies, ideologies and economic structures must change significantly so that we can live in balance with the biosphere (Sale 1988, p.671). Many Deep Ecologists, such as members of the radical group Earth First!, have resorted to direct action such as tree-spiking to defend these principles; others, such as Seed, have taken a more spiritual approach, asking people to feel their connections to a living planet through workshops and meditation.

Numerous criticisms of Deep Ecology have arisen, the most vocal coming from the Social Ecology movement headed by Murray Bookchin. Similar in many ways to EJ, Social Ecology as a framework emphasizes the ways in which particular social institutions – governments, corporations, military operations, and others – degrade the natural world and denigrate many of the world’s people. Kirkpatrick Sale, writing in The Nation (1988), has articulated three main points of contention which Social Ecologists have with Deep Ecologists. The first is that DE “has no explicit ‘social’ analysis – that is, it does not adequately talk about matters of class, race, injustice, capitalism, imperialism and the like, and instead tends to regard humans collectively” (Sale 1988, p. 672) when particular institutions or worldviews are responsible for social and ecological damage. The second point engages DE’s concerns about the population size, claiming that DE’s call to reduce population and its casting of famine as a “natural phenomenon” (Sale 1988, p. 672) is cruel and targets the poorest and most downtrodden. The third, related contention is that Deep Ecologists are fundamentally misanthropic, by valuing humans no more than other species and less than the biosphere as a whole.

From an environmental justice standpoint, these are serious points against Deep Ecology. EJ defines itself by giving attention to the differences in environment and privilege experienced by different races, classes and cultures as a result of the decisions made by specific institutions. It therefore aligns much more closely with a Social
Ecology framework. Yet my own experience of Deep Ecology has been very helpful in engaging EJ issues. Although DE does not explicitly focus on differences of race or class, its critique of the social systems which lead to disconnection from the natural world is similar to Bryant’s conception of EJ. In particular, it looks at the ways in which modern technologies and economies of growth disconnect people from the consequences of their consumerism. While EJ focuses on the effects of this on marginalized peoples, DE considers the needs and rights of nonhumans and the biosphere – but both present strong critiques of modern capitalist society.

Although it is difficult to generalize, many Native activists in particular use the discourse of Deep Ecology in their claims for environmental justice. Theirs is a wider definition of justice, which encompasses more than just humans. As the Iroquois chief Oren Lyons speaks it, “fairness to people and fairness to the environment are inseparable.” “The Western concept of justice,” he says, “applies almost exclusively to humans, but our [Iroquois] justice applies to everything, even to water” (Schneider 1994, 112). C.A. Bowers, who writes about ecologically-based education, describes traditional Native peoples as having a “shared sense of the wholeness and interdependency of all life forms” (Bowers 1993, 206), a sense which leads them to value all human beings, regardless of race, as well as nonhuman life forms.

The philosopher and writer Daniel Quinn has written several books which indirectly attempt to reconcile the ideas of Deep Ecology and Social Ecology. Quinn’s novels *Ishmael* (Quinn 1992) and *My Ishmael* (Quinn 1997) have as their protagonist a sentient gorilla, Ishmael, who is able to speak telepathically to his students. The ape’s message, expounded upon in different ways in each book, is simple yet profound: human beings lived in balance with their natural surroundings for hundreds of years, and many indigenous cultures still have the skills to do so. It is not humanity as a whole, Ishmael tells his students, that is toxic to the earth. It is only one type of culture, that which he calls “Takers,” (and which to him includes many Eastern as well as Western societies,
including those indigenous cultures who wish to modernize or are tied into a cash economy) who are unwilling or unable to follow the laws of nature and are thus living an inherently unsustainable lifestyle. Quinn points to what he calls “totalitarian agriculture” for the historical shift which created Taker cultures. This type of agriculture, he says, is based on a worldview that says humans not only have a right to enough food to sustain their population, but have the right to kill their competitors or deny their competitors food in order to have more food for people. In effect, says Quinn, it attempts to take human beings out of the food chain, a course as ultimately futile as trying to fly an airplane while ignoring the laws of aerodynamics.

Quinn’s insistence that a single worldview, not anything inherent in the human species, is responsible for human environmental destruction echoes Social Ecology and environmental justice ideas. Yet his insistence that indigenous, land-based cultures (whom he calls “Leavers” to distinguish them from Takers) hold the key to reestablishing ourselves as members of the biotic community follows Deep Ecology principles. “Once you exempt yourself from the law of limited competition,” Ishmael tells one of his students, “everything in the world except your food and the food of your food becomes an enemy to be exterminated” (Quinn 1992, p. 132). In other words, only by re-entering the food chain, taking no more than we need, and acknowledging ourselves as subject to the same laws as every other species can we live in harmony with the biosphere. In another book, The Story of B (1996), Quinn extends this idea. Leaver peoples are not somehow more moral or environmentally well-behaved than “modern” man, he says, but “living in the community of life [gives] them something we’ve lost, which is a complete understanding of where we come from” (Quinn 1996, p. 181), and that understanding leads to a deep reverence for the sacred in nature. It is the difference, he says, between the Taker view that “the world was made for Man, and Man was made to conquer and rule it” (Quinn 1996, p.188) and the Leaver view that “the world is a sacred place and a sacred process. . . and we’re part of it” (Quinn 1996, p.189).
I have found Quinn’s ideas both practically useful and philosophically inspirational in my environmental justice and education work. The goal of both the environmental justice movement and ecologically-based education, it seems to me, is to encourage members of Taker cultures – those which are not in balance with the rest of nature, and which keep their food, according to Quinn, “under lock and key” (Quinn 1996) – to begin reconnecting to the biosphere in both a physical and spiritual sense. When I work with inner-city youth or activists, I am acutely aware of any “Taker” assumptions they and I have about the world – assumptions that more is better, that the “American dream” can and should be theirs, that the only way for humans to survive on the planet is to get a wage-paying job so they can buy food. And I think about Quinn’s warnings against “angelizing” or romanticizing indigenous cultures. The people themselves were not better, he reminds us, but they lived in ways that worked over the long term – and there were as many ways as there were sustainable cultures. Quinn’s ultimate message is that each of us can help re-evolve ways of living that work within the context of today’s world, and I try to bring that message to the people that I work with.

Finally, I have in my own life experienced strong feelings that social and environmental issues are linked, on a level which can best be described as spiritual. By “spiritual” I do not mean religious; rather, both being in natural settings and working with social activists have provoked a profound sense of love and respect for all of the Earth’s creatures. Weaver and Cottrell (1992) describe this sense in an educational setting as “having students passionately reaching for goals that have personal meaning and that will enhance their lives” (p.426); I would extend this definition to include a sense of connectedness and love for all of Creation, a deep feeling that can only be superficially described but is life-changing when felt.

During a night hike I once took in North Carolina, ten high school students and I stood at the base of a huge waterfall under a nearly-full moon. I was suddenly struck by an intense sense of my own power, and with that a deep understanding of my
responsibility to help the young people I was with find their voice and vision, as I helped them reconnect with a vital, living and precious planet. I felt no separation between issues of social hierarchy and issues of environmental responsibility; such a distinction made no sense at the time. Instead I felt a connection to all beings which I could express through any action from a group prayer, to practicing a primitive skill such as shelter-building, to working with inner-city activists. I have felt that same sense of power in settings from educational trainings to outdoor trips to Episcopal church conferences, and the periodic experience of it is what reminds me to keep doing environmental and EJ work.

Therefore, I approach EJ as one aspect of a larger picture which encompasses environmental work, social justice work, and education in a framework of respect and connection for all living things. This could be considered akin to the EJ activists working at the level of environmental justice rather than equity, Deep Ecologists, or some Native American earth philosophy. As I designed and carried out my thesis, I was thinking not only of environmental justice in education per se but of how to regain this sense of the sacred, how to use EJ as a tool to reconnect children to each other and their natural world. Not all of my interviewees, certainly, shared such a perspective; and my commitment was to listen to them from their own point of view wherever possible. But that was my foundation.

**Experiences as an Educator**

I have worked as an educator in three distinct settings. The first was as a highly inexperienced seventh grade science and history teacher at Pine Point School, a small private school in southeastern Connecticut which attracted many borderline students who “fell through the cracks” in public school. The second was as a counselor for a primitive camp for gifted teens in western North Carolina. As part of the Green River Preserve, two other staff and I lived with ninth and tenth graders for eighteen-day periods in a
wooded camp with no running water, phones or electricity. My third experience was as a counselor and curriculum developer for Eagle Eye Institute, a Boston-based environmental justice organization that brought inner-city youth to the Berkshire mountains for one-day forest field trips.

The fact that I had little experience in any of these settings when I began the jobs proved an asset in many ways. Because I had few preconceived ideas about how to teach or lead programs, I was able to develop my own teaching philosophy and research and incorporate only those ideas that resonated with my own experience in the classroom or camp. Following are some of the lessons which I bring to this research project.

I began my teaching at Pine Point by doing what I thought teachers were "supposed" to: setting the classroom rules and trying to get my students to understand the information in the curriculum I had been given to teach. I soon found that this approach seemed both hollow and ineffective. I did not feel very related to my students, and they had little incentive (other than grades and approval from adults) to learn the material they were being taught. I began to ask my students what they most wanted to learn, and why they thought it was important. Our curriculum became a collaboration between the written curriculum, my own ideas about what was important for students to know, and the students' suggestions and questions. I made it clear that tests were only a way for me to gauge their understanding, and I met one-on-one with struggling students to ask them what their goals were and where they felt they were getting stopped in learning.

Similarly, at Green River Preserve I felt deeply that much of the value of the camp experience lay in the campers' relationships with each other and with staff. When we related to them as thoughtful young adults, and drew out of them their own goals and visions, they blossomed - many campers tried challenges they had never considered themselves capable of, or reexamined their beliefs or values as a result of conversations with us. And at Eagle Eye Institute, I began the summer feeling that I had little rapport with our inner-city youth. When I became aware that I was relating to them as "different"
from me, and began to ask them about their lives and goals, we started hitting it off – they opened up to me about their lives, and by the end of each day trip I was surrounded by campers.

What I learned in each of these situations was that effective teaching comes from really listening and relating to students, and their ideas, visions and concerns – not by following a particular ideology or teaching method. When I tried to apply someone else’s ideas about teaching – even ideas such as critical pedagogy – I failed unless I was able to really listen to and connect with my students or campers. If they felt respected, heard, and treated as capable and intelligent, they responded that way. This was critical for two reasons. First of all, as a teacher my ultimate goal was to empower my students, not to teach them particular material. Much more than any information I taught, the process of listening to and dialoguing with students about their lives, values, and goals furthered my own goal. Secondly, students were not able to effectively learn the material in the overt (as opposed to “hidden” or value-based) curriculum unless they felt respected and personally invested in learning that information.

I also learned that students were willing to and, in fact, really wanted to talk about current social issues. When conversations about environmental problems or welfare reform were done in such a way that students’ opinions were valued even as they were challenged, students in all the settings I worked in were eager to dialogue and debate. They saw the ways in which social issues were relevant to their own lives, and they asked probing questions in an attempt to form their own opinions about issues. For instance, when we did a unit on welfare reform in my history class (at my students’ request), students wanted to hear from caseworkers, welfare recipients, and politicians, and chose to use the information to design their own welfare reform plan. And at Eagle Eye, the youth we worked with shut down when I initially tried to “preach” about environmental responsibility, but opened up and began a lively discussion when I asked for their views. I felt that critical pedagogy, which we did not include in Eagle Eye trips,
would have made a difference in the lives of these youth. If we had taken their interests in their social environment and harnessed it by asking probing questions designed to have them look at the oppressor/oppressed dichotomy, these students might have been empowered to work for change in their own communities. As it was, we piqued their interest in the natural world and their own lives, but did not follow through in a meaningful way.

My experiences as a teacher give me a deeper understanding of what it might be like to teach environmental justice in the schools, and what approaches might be most successful. Because I have been an educator myself, I am able to integrate educational theories and the ideas of my interviewees in a way that relates directly to the realities of the classroom.

The Challenge and the Journey

The ideas described above, both my own and those of others, are woven throughout my research design and implementation, even as I made a point of really listening to my interviewees from their own perspectives. The result is a rich and sometimes complex journey through ideas of EJ and education. In the following section, I will present the details of my research methodology and then summarize my findings according to the three questions I asked initially: Are the school communities familiar with EJ? Is it taught now in any form? What suggestions and concerns are there about expanding EJ education? In the third section, I will combine these findings with the background ideas already presented to draw conclusions and make recommendations about the expansion of EJ education.
CHAPTER TWO: CHARTING THE COURSE

As I was driving back today, the question that I turned over in my head is this: Am I asking the questions I need to ask to get at what I want to get at? And, backing up, what exactly do I want to get at?... I'm clear, though, that some of the "tangents" in our conversations are the most key – the best guide I have is how animated and interested they are.

Research journal, 3/5/98

Research Design

My research is qualitative in nature. Qualitative research "is an approach to the social world that accepts its dynamic and living quality" (Eisner 1991, p.39), and attempts to understand social phenomena by observing social situations or listening to the stories of people in those situations. This is in contrast to quantitative social science research, which relies on statistical analysis of large samples of people in order to see if a particular effect can be generalized to a broader population. According to educational researcher Elliot Eisner, qualitative research has several characteristics which distinguish it from quantitative research. It is field-focused, meaning that researchers tend to observe real-life situations rather than setting up artificial manipulations of situations. Qualitative researchers recognize that they are not unbiased, and "view unique insight as the higher good" (p.33) rather than objectivity. They therefore are willing to bring their own interpretations and voice to what they study. Where the hallmark of a successful quantitative study is the extent to which data can be applied to other, similar social situations, the measures of success in qualitative research are "coherence, insight and instrumental utility" (Eisner, p. 38).

This research project is based on the participatory research (PR) process, which is a branch of social science research, often although not inherently qualitative. The aim of PR is to apply the ideas of critical pedagogy to social science research; it is research which "responds to the experiences and needs of oppressed people" (Finn 1994, p.26). It is distinct from other social science research at three key points: the choice of problem to consider, the choice of methodology, and the outcome. Where traditional social
science researchers choose a research topic before finding a study population, participatory researchers work in partnership with communities—often those that are oppressed in some way—on problems of concern to them. The methodology is inclusive, with both researchers and participants included in formulating questions and carrying out research which is of value to them personally. And, where the desired outcome of more traditional research is an accurate, objective picture of the study group, PR involves “a fundamental challenge to existing power relationships and resource control” (Finn 1994, p.28). In other words, participatory researchers have a “clearly articulated value base” (Finn 1994, p.27) and are committed to “a direct link between research and action” (Maguire 1987, p.29). The intention is to transform the worlds of the communities they work with through using the ideas of critical pedagogy in a social science research context. PR is therefore deliberately subjective and links research to social action.

I incorporated several aspects of PR in my own research. The purpose of my research was to gain ideas for implementing EJ education in public schools, and my larger goal was to create an environmentally just world through education. Therefore, it deals explicitly with power relations and empowering the “oppressed.” Although I did not, as true participatory research does, formulate a research question in conjunction with my study population, I did conduct open-ended and probing interviews which allowed participants to explore their ideas and values around EJ. And, while my intended outcome was understanding of how to teach EJ rather than a specific action in the communities I studied, several interviewees expressed that our conversation made a difference in how they taught or thought about education. In addition, my acknowledgment and use of my own personal influences—from readings such as Daniel Quinn’s to my teaching experiences—is consistent with PR. Participatory research “requires that researchers be clear about where they choose to stand regarding the daily struggles of oppressed people” (Maguire 1987, p. 35), and in the case of my research, I
felt that it was also important to be clear about my experiences and beliefs about education and environmental concerns. Just as I do not ask my research participants to be unbiased — in fact, their biases, ideas and concerns are what I am most interested in — I cannot, as a participatory researcher, force myself to be unbiased. It is in the intersection of my participants’ ideas and mine that this research lives.

Research Goal and Purpose

The ultimate goal of this research was to create a more environmentally just world through education. Within that goal, my purpose was to gain ideas for implementing successful EJ education in public high schools in western Montana through interviewing people at two schools about their understanding of, application of, and suggestions for teaching EJ.

Characteristics of Study Communities/Methods of Sampling

In order to gain an in-depth understanding of EJ issues in my study communities in a reasonable length of time, I chose to study two schools, Hellgate High School in Missoula, MT and St. Ignatius High School (“Mission”) in St. Ignatius, MT. These schools were chosen for both their similarities and differences. Both are high schools in western Montana, and both have a significant non-white population, which I felt was important since environmental justice addresses discrepancies in environments due to race. In each case the majority of students of color are Native American, and both schools have had controversy surrounding the teaching of Native students. In fact, at Hellgate (as well as other Missoula County district schools), the citizen’s group Indian People’s Action accused the administration of racism against Indians. The schools differ in size, in the type of community they are located in, and in their approach to education.

Hellgate High School is one of three high schools in Missoula, Montana, a city of approximately 45,000 people. Located near the Idaho border about halfway up the state,
Missoula is a vibrant town which boasts a major university, a booming downtown area, and many opportunities for outdoor recreation. Hellgate's enrollment is currently 1268 students. Of these, 81 are people of color, including 44 Native Americans. The school is located near the downtown area, and is considered by most in the school community to attract the most diverse student population. (Although students are assigned to high schools based on the neighborhood they live in, parents may ask to have their child transferred, and transfers are usually granted.)

St. Ignatius High School is located in the town of St. Ignatius, Montana, which is 45 miles north of Missoula and has a population of about 1000. The town is on the Flathead Indian Reservation, which is home to the Confederated Salish-Kootenai Tribes (CSKT). About 20% of the Reservation's population is Native. St. Ignatius contains one grocery store; one school complex which includes an elementary school building, a combined middle/high school building, and administrative offices; one gas station; and a well-advertised "Indian Museum." It also boasts fantastic views and a religious mission which was build in the mid-1800s and was once the heart of the town.

Enrollment at the high school in 1997-98 was 165 students, over half of whom are Native American; the Native students hailed from at least 6 different tribes. There was one African-American student and several foreign exchange students. Mission is the only high school in St. Ignatius, but many Indian students transfer to Two Eagle, the CSKT-run high school several miles north on the reservation.

At each of these schools, I interviewed four separate populations: students, teachers, parents, and administrators. I chose these groups because each has an interest in the content of education at their school, and they represent four different perspectives on that education. Other groups which I considered interviewing were school boards and local community activists. I found that school boards were difficult to schedule time with, and while activists in many cases understood local environmental justice issues, they did not have experience with education specifically.
I initially approached each school by meeting with the principal and sharing my thesis proposal with him. Once my research was approved, I was assigned a "host" teacher at the school, who helped me connect with potential interviewees. I requested to meet with at least five teachers in at least three different subject areas, with at least three administrators in various capacities, and with at least ten students with a range of ages, academic strengths and ethnic backgrounds. I contacted parents of interviewed students in order to complete parent interviews, and I also reached Indian parents through groups such as Indian People's Action in Missoula and the Indian Education Committee in St. Ignatius. In each case, my goal was to speak with people from a range of backgrounds.

My samples were by no means statistically random. I spoke only with those who expressed interest in participating in my research, and in many cases I was referred to individuals who "would be good to talk with" or "would be interested in that kind of thing." In particular, the fact that I had a host or "gatekeeper" at each school skewed my sample. This person recommended specific individuals for me to talk to, and, I suspect, focused on those people that were known to be sympathetic to social justice or environmental issues. While my hosts were invaluable in guiding me through the schools and helping me connect with respondents, they provided a different sample than I would have had if I had randomly selected interviewees, particularly in the category of teachers.

The numbers and characteristics of my interviewees are summarized in Tables 1 and 2.
Table 1: Characteristics of Hellgate Interviewees

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<th>Number Interviewed</th>
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<th>Other non-Caucasian or immigrant</th>
<th>Caucasian</th>
<th>Subjects/Positions</th>
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<tr>
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<td>2 (1)*</td>
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<td>(1)*</td>
<td>Principal, Assistant Principal, Indian Education Coordinator, Counselor</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
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*One parent had a Native child but was Caucasian

Table 2: Characteristics of Mission Interviewees

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<th>Other non-Caucasian or immigrant</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
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<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
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Research Questions

In order to accomplish my stated purpose of gaining ideas for implementing successful EJ education in public high schools in western Montana, I developed questions in three categories: understanding, application and suggestions. Below are the main questions and sub-questions which I used to generate questions for my interviewees and to organize my data.
1) **Understanding:** How do members of the school communities understand the related concepts of environmental racism/classism (which I will refer to as environmental discrimination or ED) and environmental justice?
   a) What is their understanding of the terms ED/EJ?
   b) What examples do they offer?

2) **Application:** Is ED/EJ applied in the schools? Does it exist in the curriculum now?
   a) What do people affiliated with the school think is important for students to learn, and does it include environmental and social issues?
   b) Are concepts which could be considered ED/EJ taught in any form now, and if so, how?

3) **Suggestions:** What suggestions, concerns and other responses do people have about including ED/EJ in their school curriculum?
   a) What do they see as the overall goal of environmental justice education?
   b) What specific suggestions do they have?
   c) What concerns do they have?

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**Methods of Data Collection**

I interviewed subjects at St. Ignatius High School between February and early April, 1998, and subjects at Hellgate between March and mid-April. For each of my four interviewee categories, I developed a list of open-ended questions which related to my three initial research questions. These questions were divergent in nature, and designed to provoke discussion rather than generate a specific response. Examples of questions for each population are given in Table 3, and a complete list of questions is in Appendix 1. I did not always ask the same questions or phrase questions identically. In many cases I modified questions based on something a person had mentioned or seemed interested in. This was done deliberately, and the intention was to understand each person's priorities and motivations in addition to their expressly stated reactions to
environmental justice education. This method is consistent with participatory research and yielded a more complete picture of the school's atmosphere and receptiveness to EJ education than more rigid questioning might have.

Table 3: Sample Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample Question</th>
<th>Understanding</th>
<th>Application</th>
<th>Suggestions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Students</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>Do you think that environmental injustice exists globally? Nationally? What about in your own community?</td>
<td>What do you think are the most important things you should be learning about? Why?</td>
<td>Do you think that it's important to learn about ER/EJ in school? Why or why not?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Application</td>
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<tr>
<td>Suggestions</td>
<td>Do you think that it's important to learn about ER/EJ in school? Why or why not?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Teachers</strong></td>
<td>Do your first reaction, as a teacher, to the concepts of ER and EJ?</td>
<td>Can you think of places in your curriculum where EJ issues are considered?</td>
<td>What possibilities can you envision if you were to successfully begin or expand teaching EJ?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>What is your first reaction, as a teacher, to the concepts of ER and EJ?</td>
<td>Can you think of places in your curriculum where EJ issues are considered?</td>
<td>What possibilities can you envision if you were to successfully begin or expand teaching EJ?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application</td>
<td>Can you think of places in your curriculum where EJ issues are considered?</td>
<td>What possibilities can you envision if you were to successfully begin or expand teaching EJ?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Administrators</strong></td>
<td>Are you familiar with the term ER/EJ? What does it mean to you?</td>
<td>Do you feel that your teachers already address ER/EJ in their curriculum? If so, in what classes and contexts?</td>
<td>Where do you think ER/EJ most appropriately fit in your school’s curriculum?</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Parents</strong></td>
<td>Have you ever heard the terms ER/EJ? What do you think they mean? Do you think they apply at all to your or your children's lives?</td>
<td>Do you think that your children already learn about ER/EJ issues? Please give me examples. Do you agree with what and how they're learning?</td>
<td>Do you think it's appropriate for your kids to learn about EJ? Why or why not?</td>
</tr>
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Teacher, administrator and parent interviews were conducted one-on-one in sessions ranging from 25 to 50 minutes. For the most part, they were conducted at school, although parent interviews occasionally took place in interviewee's homes or in a public place such as a restaurant or meeting hall (like the tribally-owned Longhouse in St. Ignatius). The place was negotiated at the time respondents agreed to be interviewed and I was careful to make sure it was a place comfortable for my interviewee. In each
interview I first explained the nature of my research. I then offered interviewees a consent form which gave further details about my research and which they needed to sign if they gave permission to have their name used in this thesis. (That consent form is included in Appendix 3.) After asking general questions about education and their understanding of environmental justice, I gave each participant a xeroxed sheet which contained commonly accepted definitions of environmental racism and environmental justice, based on the definitions of Bunyan Bryant. (See Appendix 2.) We then discussed these definitions and I asked further questions about their understanding of EJ, its application in the school, and their responses to teaching it. In most cases I shared the definition sheet at approximately the point indicated on the question sheets (Appendix 1). Following the interview, I edited the notes which I took and returned an edited copy to the interviewee for his/her approval. I made any changes or clarifications which the subjects recommended.

I met with students in groups of two to ten students, rather than one-on-one. This was done because I wanted a broad range of student opinions and because I felt students would talk more in groups than they would alone. I visited study halls at each school and made requests to have interested students speak with me. In some cases I also sought out particular students whom teachers recommended to me because of their unique perspective. These students sat down with me in groups of between two and ten students⁸. At each school I met with four such groups, although at Mission my first group extended over two study hall periods. The groups at Mission included an all-

⁸These groups could be considered "focus groups," in that I gathered members of a particular population and asked them a set of open-ended questions. However, unlike a true focus group, students were not carefully chosen for their differing opinions or perspectives. When I organized a group, I did make it a priority to include students of different ages, genders, and cultural backgrounds. However, the students I interviewed were dictated as much by their schedules – all had a last-period study hall, which meant they were either seniors or students who chose not to take an elective – as by their perspective or eagerness to participate.
Indian student group which I interviewed during an Indian Education Committee evening meeting.

I had students sign a consent form agreeing to be interviewed, and students younger than 18 were also required to have a parent signature for their words to be included in my thesis. Retrieving these permission slips proved to be one of the biggest challenges of my research. Some parents did not want their children interviewed, but for the most part students simply lost or forgot their permission slips. In these cases, I kept the students' responses for my analysis, but do not include any direct quotes or ideas directly attributable to those individuals in this paper.

As with the adults, I began with general questions on their education and their ideas about social and environmental education, moved on to their understanding of ER and EJ, and then shared Bunyan Bryant's definitions of each before discussing application and suggestions. I repeated student responses back to them to check for accuracy, but I did not have students review a copy of the edited transcript.

During the period that I was gathering data through interviews, I kept a research journal, another important tool in participatory research (Maguire 1987). I used this journal to reflect on my research experience, record noteworthy occurrences, and draw preliminary conclusions based on what I had noticed in the interviews. In some cases my journal reflections helped me clarify or modify my research methods. For instance, I was confronted early in my research with students who did not feel that EJ was a concern at all. I was initially unsure how to approach this. Should I try to be unbiased and simply listen? Would more information make a difference with this student, or should I play Devil's Advocate? I wrote in my journal:

I see that I'm performing a really tough balancing act. I want to appear at least somewhat neutral, so that the kids don't feel the thing is rigged... and yet I feel, strongly, that EJ education is important and that these issues are big. How to get at that without appearing hopelessly biased? Or should I be hopelessly biased? Although it's not a strict analogy, I can see what Friere ran up against with the "oppressor within" deal. How do I foster free expression while at the same time
encouraging these kids to understand that things just aren't as easy or fair as they're making it out?"

As a result of my journal reflection, I decided that I needed to be clear with my subjects that I had a bias in favor of teaching EJ, but that my role was to accurately record their responses rather than attempt to modify their ideas. I also began describing a case study – usually either Love Canal or Cesar Chavez and the grape boycott (see Appendix 5) – after I handed out the definition sheets, so students could relate the concepts to a specific case.

I also modified my research methods during the process as a result of feedback from interviewees and my own analysis of the information I was receiving. Several interviewees felt that my definitions were "too vague," or that environmental racism as defined on my definition sheet should be expanded to include classism or other forms of discrimination as well. I subsequently modified the handout to include classism as well as racism; both versions of the handouts are included in Appendix 2. I am also indebted to Doug Deason, the principal of Hellgate High School, for offering constructive criticism which helped me tighten my research methods.

Research Limitations

During the course of my research design and implementation, I became aware of several limitations of the project. The first and broadest is that, while the process that I use for gathering information on EJ education may be generalizable to other populations and geographic areas, the results of my research are not. It would not be valid to take the responses of my interviewees and design a curriculum, teacher training or other product for any schools other than those of western Montana or areas that are culturally and socioeconomically similar. This limits my ability to use the results of this research toward my broader goal of bringing EJ education to all public high schools.
Another limitation I found as the project progressed was due to the fact that my questions were very broad and general. This was a deliberate choice I made, because I wanted to give participants the opportunity to speak about what was important to them without feeling confined by my questions. But this also meant that we stayed on the surface of some potentially deep issues. I sometimes felt that interviewees did not grapple with the social implications of EJ education because my questioning was not in-depth enough to allow them to get a clear picture of those implications.

As I mentioned earlier, my small sample size and the fact that my access to interviewees was through a "gatekeeper" means that my results may not be generalizable to the broader school population. At Hellgate, for instance, most of the teachers I interviewed were people whom I was later told were sympathetic to social justice education. At both schools, access to parents was more challenging than access to other groups because parents do not spend most of their day at the school. As a result, I had an especially small sample size for parents and found that the responses from parents were most difficult to generalize to the broader school population.

Finally, as discussed above, I modified certain questions and the definitions of ER and EJ I gave to participants during the course of the project. Modifications were made as a result of feedback and constructive criticism from participants, as well as my own reflection during the process. This meant that not all interviewees responded to a particular question, or that their responses were different based on the way the question was asked or the definitions were framed. For instance, in an attempt to better understand what people thought the goals of EJ education were, I began to ask the question, "How would the world look different in 20 years if every student learned this?" I added this about halfway through my research, and so many people did not respond to it for my analysis.
Method of Analysis

In order to accurately identify themes among schools or school populations in each category of my research, I began my analysis by classifying responses according to my three categories and, within that, according to the population answering the questions: students, teachers, administrators, or parents. I then reread all of the responses in each subsection and began to organize them thematically. The results of this are summarized in Chapter 3, Research Findings.

Once I had a sense of how each population responded to each question, I looked for emergent themes within the schools and within corresponding populations at the two schools. During this process, my purpose was to answer my three questions in order to understand how to effectively teach EJ at these and similar schools. As part of this purpose, I was interested in seeing how people’s ideas about EJ and education related to critical pedagogy, Deep and Social Ecology, my own experiences with education and spirituality, and other ideas summarized in my first section.

Terminology

Throughout this thesis, I will use the terms “Indian,” “Native,” and “Native American” interchangeably to refer to people of any tribe or cultural group indigenous to North America. This is consistent with indigenous peoples’ own use of the terms; most of my interviewees who were Native referred to members of their ethnic group as “Indians” or “Indian people.”

As discussed above, during the course of my research I shifted from the use of “environmental racism” to “environmental racism/classism” in the definitions I shared with my subjects. In my discussion, I sometimes use ER to refer specifically to environmental racism in those cases where that was the definition discussed with the interviewee. In other cases, I refer to environmental discrimination or ED. This term encompasses race, class, gender and any other discrepancies in environmental
conditions, and is what I would use in future research. I did not actually use this term with my subjects.

The term "environmental justice," as discussed in Section I, can actually refer to two related but distinct ideas. One meaning is the third definition given by Bunyan Bryant - environmental justice as distinct from environmental racism and environmental equity. The second meaning refers generally to the social movement concerned with connections between environment and social justice. In discussing my research findings, I will use "environmental justice" or "EJ" to refer specifically to Bryant's and related definitions, and will use "environmental justice movement" or "EJM" to refer to the movement. "EJ" may also refer to any issue which deals with environmental discrimination, its causes or solutions.
I've discovered that the more I get out of the way and let folks talk, the more good stuff I get. . . . As soon as my clarity about the research and its ultimate goal was restored, people began speaking to it.

Research journal 3/12/98

In this chapter I present the results of my research at each school, organized according to the questions and sub-questions listed in Chapter 2. My interviewees' stories and thoughts were complex and diverse, and no amount of summarizing or analysis can fully do them justice. This section is, then, an attempt to bring order to that complexity, to place on the terrain of the schools a web of paths which will lead to a fuller understanding of how to teach environmental justice. In order to provide a context for the responses I summarize, I begin with a picture of each school, based on both my own impressions and experiences and on comments my interviewees made about their school's atmosphere. I then summarize the understanding, application, and suggestions for EJ at each school.

St. Ignatius High School: Cultural Borders, Cultural Barriers

My first contact with St. Ignatius High School came in the form of a phone call to the school's principal, Tim Skinner, after another school on the Flathead declined my request to research there. We arranged a time for me to visit the school and meet with Mr. Skinner and the district superintendent, John Matt, regarding my research.

I arrived at the school complex and made my way past a tall flagpole to the main entrance of the combined middle/high school. I was immediately ushered into Mr. Skinner's warm and cluttered office, where he welcomed me and assured me that the Superintendent would join us shortly. I presented my research proposal to both of them, and the principal's interested questioning led to a long discussion of middle and high school teaching philosophies and the challenges of teaching in an Indian community. We
discussed the need to actively engage students in their own learning process, the challenges of new technologies, and the importance of reaching out to the wider community. Although I did not record this conversation, Mr. Skinner repeated many of his ideas during our later interview. As an example of his progressive management style, he described the process he uses when a student has broken a school rule. Rather than punishing them, he gives them a handout which asks them to identify what they did, what they could have done, what they would do next time in that situation, and, if appropriate, how to correct things now. "High school students think the process is corny," he admitted, "but they do follow through." I left impressed with the insight and commitment of St. Ignatius' administrators and wondered how this would be reflected in the attitudes and knowledge of students, teachers and parents.

I first visited the school to do research on a Wednesday afternoon, a "B" day in the eight-day rotating schedule the school used. I entered during a break and was immediately enveloped by hurrying students, both middle and high school, many with Native American features. Bulletin boards along the main hallway displayed Indian art done by middle school students. As I wove my way to my scheduled meeting place with my assigned host, most students ignored me; a few said hello or held doors. The scene was a typical high school afternoon - slightly intimidating and more than a little chaotic to an outsider like myself.

My host, Alice Norton, welcomed me warmly. A small, neatly dressed woman of about my age, she told me that she was doing an internship in the counseling office and would be happy to connect me with whomever I needed. Before the day was out she had secured me ten students to talk to and introduced me to two likely teacher interviewees.

My first impressions of Mission, then, were that its administration had a strong commitment to progressive education, that its staff was friendly and open, and that an outsider would know that the school served Native American students. This brief
impression was challenged, enhanced, and colored by the descriptions my interviewees
gave of their school’s atmosphere.

Most interviewees’ comments about the social atmosphere of their school touched on
one of two subjects: racial issues, and the social and academic opportunities that people
felt the school did or didn’t provide. The first teacher I interviewed, English teacher
Myrna Lynn Vanderberg, was a white woman whose ex-husband was a tribal member
and whose children were descendants. She described her experiences trying to teach
literature by or about Native Americans:

I need to be careful around here as it pertains to the tribe or Indian/nonIndian
issues. White people are on the school boards on the reservation. . . . Anything
that seems to be from an Indian perspective is threatening. White kids don’t want
to support any Indian issue.

Lynn told me that she had tried to teach a Native-authored book and had received
complaints from several parents, who wanted to ban the book from the school. Her
experience, echoed by all of the administrators and two parents, was that racism created
what one parent called “a dividing line” at the school. “There are two communities in St.
Ignatius,” Lynn told me. Two community centers. Two senior centers.

Although no other story was as stark as Lynn’s, students and parents also mentioned
differences between Indian and white students. Native Americans are seen by some
white students as privileged, because all receive “eighteen money” – a lump sum of
money given to the student by the tribe when they turn 18. Yet one parent told me that
“it’s not that kids here envy that lifestyle (of Indian kids).” Despite the money, she said,
they see the setbacks that Indians face, and the fact that many transfer to the tribal high
school, which is commonly seen as having lower academic standards. Students could
see both advantages and disadvantages to being Indian. They got eighteen money and

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9This “eighteen money” is given to tribal members by the tribal government on their 18th
birthday. I was not able to find out its exact amount or whether it is the same for all students.
However, several respondents mentioned that students bought new cars or paid for college
with this money.
were seen by whites as protected by the tribal council if they did something wrong, but one student admitted that Indian youths are "seen as troublemakers as soon as they come in." As one Native administrator put it, "racism goes both ways," at Mission. Interestingly, the all-Native group of students I interviewed downplayed race issues at the school more than any other focus group, saying they "got along with everyone." This may have been their experience; it may also have been that they felt uncomfortable opening up to me, a white stranger who was interviewing them. I did not personally notice profound differences in the attitudes or treatment of Native students during my school visits, but I did see that it was a popular topic of conversation.

Non-native people of color are rare at St. Ignatius, and opinions varied as to how they were treated. Alice Norton told me that a student she knew of "deals with a lot of racism," but a parent interviewee said she didn't feel that minority students were discriminated against by students or teachers.

With the exception of Lynn Vanderberg, teachers I interviewed felt that issues of race did not play a large role in their classrooms. John Ligas, the science teacher, said that he felt the environmental issues he taught transcended any differences in race or culture. Another teacher told me that "I look at things colorblind," but a boy in her study hall who was eavesdropping on our conversation told her to "look beneath the surface" and she would see prejudice at the school. Were these teachers unaware of pervasive racism, or did their attitudes actually reflect or even foster a "colorblind" perspective? I found evidence of both during my visits.

In an attempt to address racial issues, the High School had instituted a "Healing Racism" class the previous academic year. According to Dale Morrow, a parent I interviewed who had taught the class, it was logistically difficult for students and teachers to attend, and Tim Skinner added that many students responded to the content of the class by saying that there was no racism at their school. The course did not survive.
Both teachers and students identified other types of discrimination besides racial at the school. One Mormon girl felt that she had been singled out because of her religious beliefs, and another in the same focus group said she saw "massive sexism" at Mission, a sentiment echoed by one of the teachers. This was particularly evident, according to students and teachers, in the athletic program. Athletes, and particularly male athletes, are seen as getting privileges that other students do not enjoy.

The preceding discussion is not meant to imply that issues of discrimination are at the forefront of every student, parent and school employee's mind; the topic of my research no doubt led many people to share their feelings on racial issues with me, and I did not ask any interviewee specifically to describe their school's atmosphere. On the other hand, my own observations and my understanding of what respondents said to me lead me to believe that race and prejudice is a common topic of discussion and thought at the school.

Besides discrimination issues, the topic most frequently brought up in relation to the school's atmosphere had to do with the presence or absence of various opportunities for students. This was primarily a concern for parents and students. The second group of students I interviewed, which included primarily juniors and seniors, lamented courses that they wanted to take but that weren't offered: mythology, sociology, drama, foreign languages. And parent Leta Sasser, who had recently moved to St. Ignatius from Georgia, felt that there was "not a lot of opportunity in Mission for other than basic things." She mentioned particularly the absence of hands-on programs like the Future Foresters of America program her son had been involved in in Georgia. The administration, however, did not mention these concerns, and gave me the impression that they felt the school did an excellent job of responding to student needs. I wondered whether the administration was not aware of student dissatisfaction, or if their representation of the school was a "party line" or, perhaps, a vision of what they hoped the future would hold for Mission.
Finally, the principal in particular mentioned home and social issues of Mission students. "It's clear that the school can't fix all the problems these kids face," he told me. "It takes systemic intervention, at all levels." Other interviewees felt that Indian people on the Flathead reservation were in a better situation than those on many other reservations, that "the tribe takes care of people," in the words of the assistant principal.

The picture of St. Ignatius High School that grew out of my interviews was of a place where adults in the community cared about students, but where racism, other social issues, and the small size of the school and community were of concern to many. It was in this context that I began my research, asking those in the school community to share their ideas about EJ education.

**Understanding at Mission: Personal Journeys**

I asked each of the four populations at Mission whether they had heard of ER/EJ, what they thought the terms meant, and whether they could identify local, regional, national, or international examples. Most students at Mission had not heard of environmental racism or environmental justice before I shared the definitions I had prepared. Their reactions to the words themselves varied. Several assumed that the terms referred to justice for the environment itself, "cops arresting trees" as one student put it jokingly, or cops arresting people who cut trees. Many were unwilling to guess at what the terms meant.

After I shared the definitions, I encountered resistance to the ideas of ER and EJ. Several students in my first focus group felt the idea was too extreme, or that environmental racism did not actually exist. Even those who agreed that people living with environmental problems "should have a choice" felt that they as students "[couldn't] do much about it." At least one student in each of the three focus groups was able to generate an example of ED which I felt showed understanding of the issues – one Indian student, for example, referred to the fact that one section of St. Ignatius is called "Indian
town" because of its population, and is considered the worst part of town to live in. Many others came up with local examples, including some that clearly fit the definition of environmental discrimination. One described a situation in a reservation town where a non-Native person (he did not identify the party involved) removed huge slabs of rock from the side of a road and left the area trashed. The area was physically beautiful before this happened, and the population was primarily older Native Americans. Other students identified more local issues: the fact that the Yellowstone Pipeline had leaked several times on the reservation, the construction of Kerr Dam on a place holy to the tribes, the widening of Highway 93 against the wishes of the tribe. Other issues mentioned had more to do with race than environment, although the students expressed that they could see an EJ component to them. These included questions of tribal sovereignty (the tribes are considered by most to take better care of their environment than state and local governments, and these tougher protections would be lost if tribes lost sovereignty), permits for non-tribal members to use reservation land for recreation, and the Eighteen Money mentioned above. Interestingly, about half of the examples given by students were reverse environmental racism – situations where they felt that white people on tribal land did not have equal environmental access or protection. They were upset that white reservation residents needed permits to hunt or hike and that during a recent controversy over Mission Dam, the tribe had threatened to close access to non-tribal members when it later became clear that members themselves were treating the area badly. Finally, there were three students, two white upperclassmen and one Native graduate (now in college), who were able to identify examples of ED outside of the reservation.

Despite this ability to understand ED/EJ and make it local, I felt that only one focus group – which contained primarily upperclassmen – understood the issue enough to be interested in really dialoguing with me about it. This group said that they could see it as an issue and would like to learn more about it so that they could make a difference. From

10See Appendix 5 for a brief summary of these and other local EJ issues.
other groups I got responses like, "you can choose how you act," and "people could get jobs and move to another neighborhood." They wanted to believe that ED was not a real concern, and did not seem interested in learning more about EJ or seeing how it might relate to their own lives.

Of the five teachers I interviewed at Mission, two already had a good understanding of or interest in environmental justice when I approached them. Lynn Vanderberg gave a concise and accurate definition of ED: "de facto racism" where the upper classes, money, or government control a particular area, "especially poor or nonwhite areas where there are dumping grounds." She mentioned projects in the 1950s, before the Indian Self-Determination Act, when "the government could control everything on reservations, and companies could use the government to gain control or use of resources." Lynn also described growing up in Lewiston, ID. As a child in school, she would watch movies produced by Potlatch Forests International (PFI) about their stewardship of land, but in reality, she said, they were doing terrible damage to Idaho's forests. Lynn offered this as another example of environmental injustice because the people of her hometown were deliberately misled about the damage the company did.

Mission also had a part-time Native American Studies teacher last year, an open and thoughtful part-Native man named George Price. As soon as I told him that I was researching environmental justice, he offered his own definition of it, with an emphasis strongly on the natural world as well as human beings. "I don't see human wants or desires as superseding the needs of the environment," he stated. Responding to my definition, he said that a clean environment should be a primary issue:

You say "sustainable communities" but it should be made clear that sustainable community includes the earth, harmonious interrelationships with the earth. My whole viewpoint could be seen as an Earth First!11 member or something. I'm not exactly in favor of radical actions, I guess. I have philosophical similarities, just a different approach.

11Earth First! is an activist organization which uses the principles of Deep Ecology in direct action on behalf of the environment; it is often described as "radical" in its approach.
In other words, while he wasn't prepared to break the law on behalf of the environment, George aligned himself strongly with people who considered the natural world at least as important as the human. As examples, he brought up the fact that as a teacher at Two Eagle River (the tribal alternative high school), he had students involved in testifying at hearings on Yellowstone Pipeline and whether its lease should be renewed on the reservation.

Apart from George Price and Lynn Vanderberg, who both had family ties to the tribes, no teachers initially showed a strong understanding of ER/EJ issues. One teacher was familiar with the struggles of Indian People’s Action, a Missoula-area Indian rights group, although she did not bring up issues that were specifically environmental in nature. Another told me that he had heard of EJ but not ER. After I shared the definitions of each with him, he mentioned having heard of secret medical experiments being performed on black men. He wondered interestingly whether a similar thing could have happened on the Flathead, or whether there were — as it appeared to him — higher cancer rates on the reservation due to exposure to toxins. John Ligas, the science teacher, had not heard of either concept. When I shared definitions, he seemed confused and couldn’t identify a specific reaction to them, remarking that “the terminology doesn’t give you the real meaning.” He was also initially unclear on the differences between environmental racism and environmental justice until I clarified the definitions further. He then showed more affinity for the concept of EJ than ER, bringing up air quality in Missoula, the proposed Blackfoot mine, and wastewater treatment in Arlee as environmental justice issues. John seemed uncomfortable with discussing racial issues, preferring to speak about general environmental justice issues.

None of the five administrators I interviewed had heard of ER or EJ before I approached them. Yet all seemed highly interested in the ideas; the superintendent, John Matt, had even checked the internet for information on EJ between the time I scheduled an interview with him and the time we met. Although he insisted that his “understanding
is pretty weak," his description of EJ is arguably the most concise and accurate I received from any interviewee:

... it relates to different groups of people having different environmental quality because of their ethnic background or the culture in which they live. An example would be that it would be a lot easier to put a nuclear waste disposal site next to an impoverished area in Arizona than next to Beverly Hills. It asks, do individuals have the same quality of life as everyone else?

Mr. Matt was also the only interviewee at Mission to talk specifically about the political implications of EJ. Using the example of pollution along the Clark Fork River in Montana, he said that "the people downstream don't have the same quality of life as upstream, with all the pollution. But the people that it isn't OK with don't have a strong [political] lobby."

Both the principal and assistant principal, as well as the superintendent, generated local and national examples of EJ. Mr. Skinner brought up water rights on the reservation, differences in logging practices on reservation and non-reservation land (privately owned land is much more heavily logged), and mining on the Cheyenne and Crow reservations. Mr. Picard said he didn't feel that ER was a big issue here because "this reservation takes care of people," but saw ER/EJ issues on other reservations and in urban areas. (He did not offer specific examples.) And Mr. Matt discussed differences in water quality and water cost on different parts of the reservation, as well as "Indian town."

Alice Norton, the counseling intern who sat in on most of my student interviews, told me that she had heard the term EJ but had never really processed it. She had no specific examples. Finally, another administrator, who is Native, was able to generate accurate definitions before I shared mine, although she told me she hadn't heard of ER or EJ. She said that ER was "legislative racism – if it's on the reservation it's put on the back burner" and that EJ involves people defending against that when it occurs.
Of the four parents I interviewed, two clearly had a prior understanding of EJ issues. Dale Morrow, the parent who had organized a “Healing Racism” class at Mission, said he understood EJ to be that “each person and each organization and each country has to be responsible for what they’re emitting,” and that environmental costs need to be included in production of products. (The latter is a common idea in environmental economics; it is not usually applied to EJ.) He also pointed to economic status as important (this was before I had included classism on the definition sheet): “There’s the owning class and there’s the rest of us. . . . I think much of toxic dumps being put in on reservations or in black communities is as much because they’re poor as because of race.” Like others I interviewed, Dale gave the example of tribal sovereignty, pointing out that environmental quality would go down if the tribes no longer had the ability to set their own environmental standards. Charles Tellier, a tribal member and former Air Quality manager for the tribe, was very familiar with ER/EJ as well. “Living on a reservation, you get quickly acquainted with environmental racism,” he said. “They’ll readily put subgrade pipeline through, it doesn’t matter to them where they put a junkyard, there’s no standards for water quality.”

The two other parents I interviewed had not heard of ER/EJ, but were able to generate accurate examples when I shared definitions. Leta Sasser told me I was “the first person [she] heard tie environmentalism and racism. Thinking about it, though, it’s obvious that the richer you are, the nicer your environment is.” She mentioned the differences in Route 93 on the reservation versus in the richer Bitterroot Valley, and said that in her home state of Georgia it was always very obvious which houses and jobs belonged to blacks versus whites. Leta had a broad view of ER: “It affects everyone; you can’t poison people because you don’t know them.” Liz Couch, another white parent, guessed that ER was “the amount of tensions that exist in a given area between the people who live in that area” and that EJ had to do with a legal response to that. She spent about five minutes reading and pondering my definition sheet, and mentioned Yellowstone Pipeline
and the disruptive noise of planes at Malmstrom Air Force Base in Great Falls as issues. She was more focused on issues of race and how they affected her children, pointing out that eighteen money and the fact that many Indian children transfer out of Mission "makes a greater dividing line for racism."

In summary, I found that at Mission, the initial understanding of environmental racism and environmental justice varied considerably within each population, with some interviewees giving accurate and detailed definitions and others unsure of the terms' meanings. Among the four populations, administrators were most consistent and accurate in their ability to generate definitions. Once the meaning of the concepts was made clear to Mission interviewees, however, almost all were able to give me examples of EJ issues. Most of these had to do with issues on the Flathead reservation itself, both environmental racism and "reverse" ER. Participants seemed to understand EJ on a very personal level, offering examples in their own community. Several students expressed doubt that ED was a real issue, but all other interviewees seemed interested and willing to learn more about EJ and saw how it might apply locally.

**Application at Mission: A Faint Trail to EJ**

The focus of my questions to students included asking what they felt was most interesting, important and useful in their high school education. Their answers fell into three categories: things that encouraged independent thinking, "real-world" skills, and subjects that they found generally interesting. Many, particularly in the first and second groups, mentioned things that were hands-on or allowed them to think independently: debates, arguments over controversial issues, writing bills and learning how to improve the government. Several students in each group also pinpointed classes they felt would "help for the future" or relate to the "real world:" journalism, public speaking, history. (This also included things they weren't especially interested in but thought they "should" learn, like math and science.) Finally, there were long lists of subjects the students found
“interesting,” although they didn’t necessarily see specific practical uses for them: math, chemistry, sports, and mythology and drama (which two students wished were offered). I did not ask these groups specifically if they felt it was important to learn about social justice or environmental issues (I did ask Hellgate students). No one specifically mentioned environmental issues, but their mention of journalism, government and history seemed to point to a desire to learn about social issues. Conspicuously missing – except for one Indian student’s brief mention of it – were more specific interpersonal social skills or issues of race relations.

I asked each group what social or environmental issues they learned about in their classes. No students felt they learned a lot about EJ-related issues, although opinions were divided on the reasons. Several in groups 1 and 2 mentioned their current events class, which one student said was “the only class we learn anything in.” Others brought up mining and other environmental issues which had been discussed in science class. An upperclassman lamented that social and environmental issues were “not considered something we need to be educated about,” not something administrators or other adults considered students’ business. But one of my Indian interviewees admitted that “we’re not paying attention” when issues such as tribal sovereignty or road expansion are discussed.

I interviewed St. Ignatius teachers early on during my research process and did not specifically ask them what they felt was important for their students to learn. It is therefore difficult to draw any meaningful conclusions about what teachers think their students should learn. I can, however, extrapolate some ideas by looking at what teachers focused on when asked other questions, such as what they do teach now.

As mentioned during the section on Mission’s school atmosphere, Lynn Vanderberg has a strong commitment to teaching about Native American issues and social justice. She tries to teach at least one novel by or about Indian people each academic year, but told me that for much of her teaching “I do it from a different way” because of the
resistance she has met with in the past. Lynn uses science fiction, fantasy, and novels from various historical periods to delve into issues of justice, social class, and the future of humankind with her students. For instance, she described her use of the British novel *When Christ and His Saints Slept* by Sharon Kay Penman.

It's about a few families controlling England, how people's religion and life have been manipulated for the gratification of a few. You can use more "classical" literature to look at power relations — literature as history. "Classical" literature is basically by barbarians who wrote well about it. We can learn to deconstruct this: to take the heroic issues and look at the reality behind them.

Lynn uses these less controversial novels to explore with her students the same types of issues that might be raised by a Native American novel: issues of culture, oppression of one group of people by another, and the structure of society.

Although Lynn’s commitment to teaching about social issues was most evident, all the teachers I interviewed had some kind of social or environmental component to their teaching, often a very strong one. Mission’s history and government teacher described his curriculum to me:

I teach current events, world history, US history, government. I try to have a continuation. Sophomore and junior year are background for senior government. They do an in-depth study of the Constitution: they memorize amendments and all that. They do a mock presidential election, go through the primary and general election process. . . . Then we do the legislature. They write bills, debate them with one class as the House and one the Senate. If it passes both, the "President" who’s elected in each class signs or vetoes bills.

After that his classes study philosophers and write U.N. resolutions; he encourages students to write bills and resolutions that deal with current social and environmental problems, although it isn’t a requirement. The students gain an experiential and in-depth understanding of how to participate in their government, and this teacher demonstrated a strong commitment to social and environmental issues during this process.

John Ligas, Mission’s science teacher, said he spends a great deal of his curriculum on environmental topics. He identified wilderness, growth management, logging and the
EIS process as areas of focus in his curriculum. The day that I interviewed him, he had discussed rainforests and the medicinal value of rainforest plants with students. "We need to protect people from rampant industrialism," he told me when I asked why he spent time on these issues. John felt that it was important to see issues from both sides and let students come to their own conclusions about them - yet he clearly hopes they will choose a perspective similar to his own. His students' responses, he said, are "remarkably favorable (from an environmental standpoint) once they see a certain side of things." According to John, his curriculum does not include ER issues, because he "[doesn't] like to dwell on examples of racism," preferring "to think about equal treatment for everyone."

George Price, the Native American Studies teacher, mentioned several things that he had done with students in other schools and hoped to do at Mission. He wanted his students to be exposed to general Native American spiritual knowledge, to see the Earth as the source of all life and economics as an extension of that, and to think about race and cultural relations between Native and nonnative people.

I also interviewed St. Ignatius' band teacher. Although her curriculum does not explicitly have room for social and environmental justice issues, she mentioned that she teaches about world music and that she is careful not to let race become an issue in her own classroom.

Administrators had many ideas about what was important for their schools to apply and emphasize. John Matt and Tim Skinner talked about basic academic skills their students would need: mathematics, communication skills, being information-and technology-literate so that they could use technology to their advantage. All of the four I asked (I did not ask this question to the Native American administrator because of time constraints) also emphasized community and/or society. Mr. Skinner said one of his priorities is for "the community [of St. Ignatius] to see itself as part of the school," so that the school was valued in the community. He felt this was important not only for the
school as an institution, but also so kids who had social problems which transcended school could begin to get their needs met. Robert Picard, the assistant principal and athletic director, also mentioned communication with the wider community as a priority in his job, and Alice Norton mentioned racism as an important area of concern. Broadening to the world community, both John Matt and Tim Skinner said that they felt an understanding of environmental issues was an "extremely important part of what we do," in Mr. Matt's words. He also said that "an understanding of diversity is probably the cornerstone of where education needs to be looking."

Tim Skinner, Alice Norton and John Matt also felt that an important part of the school's mission was to create "benevolent citizens," adults who would fit in smoothly in the larger society. John Matt, in fact, called his "number one priority" as an administrator "to develop programs to have kids ready for the next century so they're productive members of society. Every kid is headed in a different direction, but the goal is that they're all productive." Alice Norton, who counsels students who are having trouble, was perhaps more blunt:

The most important thing is to learn to live within the systems. A lot of kids aren't successful in the school system. They need to learn how to live with that, use it to their advantage in a positive way without losing their individuality.

Although the emphasis is on learning to "live within" an existing system rather than empowering students for change, Mission administrators did show a commitment to teaching skills beyond the traditional academic curriculum.

Despite this commitment, the administrators painted a picture of St. Ignatius' curriculum which did not include systematic teaching of social justice or environmental issues, and which contained almost nothing that could be labeled ER/EJ. Tim Skinner admitted that they weren't areas the school has pushed, saying "environmental justice is at the top of a hierarchy of needs and a safe school is at the bottom – we need to do that first." Tim Skinner and Robert Picard felt that students were apathetic about these issues
"If it doesn't impact the kids directly," Mr. Skinner told me, "they don't see a need to change their behaviors," and that direct connection can be difficult to make.

Two people mentioned social justice education at the school. Robert Picard brought up the "Healing Racism" class that had been tried and said he hoped to continue the project so people understood that racism is an issue and is not tolerated at the school. John Matt described a "heritage model" that the school uses for research: students get out into the community, interview people, and get involved in community projects. He suggested that EJ issues could be applied to this model. Despite these examples, however, administrators did not indicate that social or environmental justice issues were currently a significant part of the curriculum.

Like administrators, parents felt that their children needed to learn basic academic skills – math, the ability to communicate clearly, history, computer skills – as well as survival skills for their futures outside of school. Leta Sasser wanted her son to be able to earn a living – to do hands-on projects like the Future Foresters of America program that would give him job and life skills. Liz Couch was even more specific; she wanted her children to learn skills like apartment-hunting and budgeting time and money.

Yet, again like administrators, parents strongly emphasized the larger social context that their children were living in. Leta Sasser's first response to the question "What do you think is most important for your children to learn?" was "to be able to provide for themselves within the structure of society," to take care of themselves but also "to have made an improvement for being here, rather than taking away from what's on the planet." Dale Morrow extended this by listing the virtues he felt all students should be taught: honesty, justice, fairness, the interrelationship of humankind, tolerance. Parents felt strongly that social and environmental issues should be part of the curriculum; tribal member Charles Tellier felt that "to have a healthy livelihood, a person has to have some self-sacrifice" and so preparing kids for the future included understanding both social and environmental issues, since "if you're handicapped in one, you're handicapped in the
other.” Liz Couch emphasized environmental issues and said she teaches environmental responsibility to her sons at home. And both Dale Morrow and Leta Sasser emphasized the spiritual and global nature of learning to be a responsible world citizen. “You have to have a connection, there has to be a spiritual understanding,” to teach about EJ and related ideas, Leta told me, and Dale said he felt “that the survival of the planet hinges upon everyone understanding that we’re all one people.”

Almost unanimously, parents felt that little was being done to address social justice or environmental issues in St. Ignatius’ curriculum. Dale acknowledged that the ideas seemed “radical and subversive” to many teachers and community members, and Charles Tellier felt that “the school system isn’t geared to that” so any efforts that individual teachers make are half-hearted. Both Charles and Liz said they teach environmental and social responsibility at home, but they could see that their children didn’t understand or feel that it was an important issue to them personally. “My children recycle because it’s a family rule, not because they believe in it,” Liz told me.

In terms of application of EJ and related ideas, all segments of Mission’s community have a commitment to teaching and learning issues and skills beyond the strict academic curriculum: skills to help students survive in the future, social skills, and social and environmental issues. Yet most of these areas did not appear to be taught systematically at the school. Students felt that they were discouraged from thinking about important social issues, and administrators and parents could not identify EJ or related topics in the curriculum. However, the individual teachers I interviewed did describe areas of their own curriculum that incorporated subject matter related to EJ.

Suggestions at Mission: Expanding the Journey

Students at Mission suggested two main goals for teaching ER/EJ. The first is, as one student put it, “to know it exists” – to be more aware of and knowledgeable about EJ issues. Fewer students took this idea to its logical next step – that the goal of becoming
more knowledgeable would be to make a difference or get involved. Those who did expressed this on both an individual and group level. One girl in the second group envisioned herself being “more informed and involved, looking for ways to help.” An Indian student in the third group imagined that “the community would discuss what’s going on,” where now the issues are taboo. Only the first group, which included several vocal and conservatively-minded students, did not mention any specific results of learning ER/EJ. Their answers were vague and general: “So you’ll always have things around,” “More knowledge is always better.”

All three groups, however, offered copious and specific suggestions for how ER/EJ could be brought into the classroom. The themes that emerged from their suggestions were twofold: let students think independently, and do hands-on learning. Students in the first two focus groups emphasized the need to allow students to form their own opinions after hearing many points of view, rather than expecting them to think a particular way. Almost everyone also stressed the importance of hands-on, real-life experiences, whether going on field trips, reading articles on current events, or having guest speakers come to class. Other ideas, mentioned by one or two students, were the possibility of having an extracurricular activity around EJ, brainstorming ways to solve future problems (this student used the example of electric cars), and using movies or other visuals.

Students had concerns about teaching EJ. Some mentioned a garbage pickup project that had been done the previous fall, and complained that it hadn’t been explained or integrated into the rest of their curriculum; they were concerned that EJ education might face the same fate. Several people in my first focus group were cynical, saying that things will never be solved no matter how much you fight over them or that EJ isn’t a real issue in the first place. In the second group, students could envision conflicts with parents and the school board if EJ was taught, and one girl feared EJ would become “one more thing to worry about when we can’t change it.” The group with the fewest
concerns was my third, all Native group. They were generally very positive about teaching EJ, although they were resistant to my efforts to dig further into potential problems and gave somewhat superficial answers, such as “some people will always have differences, but it’s worth a shot.”

When asked about suggestions, the teachers I interviewed were very clear about what they saw as the goals of EJ education, although they were somewhat different for each. Lynn Vanderberg wanted kids to “think for themselves; think about how national, state and regional decisions impact them as individuals.” George Price wanted students to “understand the impact of imposing your will on the land and people;” the history teacher extended this to a moral statement, saying young people need to know that it’s “not OK to use other humans as guinea pigs. . . not OK to profit from other people’s misery.” Finally, the band teacher saw the goal as a life-and-death issue more than a moral one: “We need to become conscious, or we won’t have a world to worry about anymore.” In all cases, the goal was a change in the way people think about EJ issues.

Teachers almost all saw and were excited about specific ways to integrate EJ into their own or others’ curricula. Lynn Vanderberg envisioned teaching EJ through literature, much as she does now. She felt that science fiction, especially books such as Asimov’s *Brave New World*, were an effective way to “sensitize kids who can’t deal with the issue openly.”

Mission’s history teacher imagined ways to include EJ issues in the curriculum he already teaches, by having students write bills or UN resolutions that dealt specifically with environmental justice issues. He also suggested doing an entire unit on ER, an idea echoed by John Ligas. John, however, suggested a cross-curricular approach, combining science, social studies and English topics. (His ideas for literature, though, included Ed Abbey and John McPhee, who write about environmental issues but not environmental justice.) John also felt that ideas needed to be initiated by students, and that environmental education of any kind needed to begin in the younger grades.
Not surprisingly, given the history of her attempts to teach Indian issues, Lynn Vanderberg had the most concerns about whether EJ education was realistic. She, along with John Ligas and the band and history teachers, expected resistance to teaching EJ. “White kids don’t want to be taught they’re bad,” she pointed out, and EJ education might sound that way. The history teacher was similarly concerned that EJ would “be viewed as a racial issue” and polarize the community—especially if student research were to uncover previously unknown instances of environmental racism in the community, such as secret testing. And, as the band teacher phrased it, “When you approach things with anger, that’s what you get back.” In other words, they feared that teaching EJ might lead to one group or another getting angry rather than encouraging the school and community to seek solutions to EJ problems. Only one teacher, George Price, mentioned any logistical constraints to teaching EJ; he lamented that the structure of schools made it difficult to get students out into the community.

The list of goals for EJ education mentioned by administrators sounds strikingly like the goals of traditional environmental education: awareness, understanding, respect, action. Tim Skinner and the home-schooling coordinator mentioned awareness or enlightenment about the issues as a goal, both on an individual and community level. Robert Picard, Alice Norton, and John Matt listed understanding as a primary goal. Mr. Matt described “understanding without judgment—unbiased but comprehensive,” and Mr. Picard saw understanding as the key to respect: “If we understood there would be respect.” Only the home-schooling coordinator saw empowerment or actually “fighting for a cause” as a realistic goal. Other administrators seemed more skeptical, saying that EJ education “won’t obliterate racism.”

Tim Skinner offered many suggestions for integrating EJ education from his position as principal. He wanted to see it integrated into the whole curriculum, using technology to enhance students’ experience of community, such as e-mailing students in another country about their EJ experiences. He felt the only way to accomplish integration in a
place like St. Ignatius was one person at a time, and he quoted Mother Teresa's maxim that “we can do no great things, only small things with great love.” Talking with teachers and parents individually, he felt, was the only way to “change their hearts, [instead of] just giving them information and strategies” which wouldn’t last in the long term.

Robert Picard and John Matt, similarly, saw communication with teachers and administrators as key to the success of an EJ education program at Mission. In fact, Mr. Picard took this a step further, suggesting that not only should different groups associated with the school be involved, but local groups such as ranchers and tribal officials should be part of the educational effort. Alice Norton and Mr. Matt both envisioned this involvement happening through research projects in which students interviewed people and did field trips about local issues.

Administrators were very positive about EJ education, and the concerns they did have echoed those of others I interviewed. Some, like Alice Norton and John Matt, recognized that there would be resistance in the community. Still, John pointed out that “we already teach stuff like that,” and seemed willing to risk offending some. Tim Skinner was more concerned about how to create a program that would “change hearts” over the long term, since he felt that the changes he’d made in his two years as principal still didn’t have the momentum to survive without him. He also had logistical concerns: what gets left out if EJ education is included, and where does the school find the money for a program that would be successful?

The parents I interviewed had almost utopian goals for EJ education. “All young people want to save the world,” Leta Sasser told me, if you give them a place to put their energy and a spiritual grounding. Liz Couch envisioned a world in which communities would be drawn together, compromises would be easier to reach, and people would be inspired to support what they believe in. Charles Tellier spoke on a more practical level, hoping that kids would have a newfound instinct not to litter or overconsume. “Maybe that’s so far-fetched that it’s not even real,” he admitted, “but I’d like to see that as the
end result.” Dale Morrow’s ideas were even more utopian: he saw a “world society
where we live by the Golden Rule,” where there are no economic classes, and where
people are taught “love for the Creator – the right relations with the Higher Power and
each other.” The solutions to ED and other world problems, he said, become easily
visible when people recognize that we are all one family.

Like other groups, parents suggested that hands-on learning was important to
effective EJ education. Both Leta Sasser and Charles Tellier suggested programs similar
to the Future Foresters of America, where young people are taught hands-on forestry
skills, and Liz Couch imagined hands-on projects in several disciplines: debates in
English, field trips in science. Several parents also mentioned the importance of teacher
understanding and support of EJ education, although they were conflicted as to how
important the teacher’s particular point of view is. Charles Tellier, for instance, felt that
“there are no [cultural] barriers” to teaching about environmental issues, but Liz Couch
felt that having a Native person teach Native American Studies was important. And,
again echoing others, Dale Morrow reminded me that students need to be free to talk
about ideas and form their own opinions for their education to have an impact. Both Dale
and Leta stressed the spiritual aspect of teaching EJ. When I asked Dale how to begin EJ
education, his answer had nothing to do with a specific curriculum or lesson:

It’s innate in every human being that we have this: Like a plant turns to the sun, we
all have that same need to turn to our Creator. I think that in today’s society we try to
satisfy that yearning or that need to be turning to the Creator with drugs, alcohol, the
acquisition of things – but everything in this universe is cyclical, and the very fact that
we have today a very materialistic society tells me that soon the pendulum will swing
and we’ll start getting back to a real search for spirituality.

Dale, and other parents, saw that an education that would lead to the radical change
they envisioned would be controversial. “It challenges the status quo and the major
economic interests of this country,” Dale pointed out, and so there is a danger that
educators could “create an alliance that’s as disunifying as what we’re trying to correct,”
that becomes an “us versus them” mentality, similar perhaps to what Lynn Vanderberg
faced. Charles Tellier invoked this same sense by telling me about a sign he'd seen outside a local restaurant during the controversy over old-growth logging and spotted owl habitat; the sign said “Spotted Owl Soup.” “Environmentalist is not a well-liked word around here,” he confessed.

The other major concern mentioned by parents was that it simply wouldn’t make a difference. Liz said she has difficulty even getting her kids to recycle, because their attitude is “What difference is one can going to make?” Dale brought up the difficulties he’d had with his Healing Racism class and wondered about both the logistics and the school support for this kind of project. Overall, however, parents had high hopes for EJ education.

The goals of EJ education envisioned by my interviewees ranged from understanding, to empathy and respect for others, to real change in the quality of life for victims of ED. Members of each group offered specific suggestions for teaching EJ, and the themes were similar across groups: hands-on learning, involve the community, allow students to think critically and independently. Participants did see potential problems with teaching EJ, ranging from community resistance to logistical concerns. But the general response to the idea of EJ education was very positive.

After about a month of interviewing the St. Ignatius school community, I turned my attention to Hellgate. The picture of EJ education that the Hellgate community gave me both expanded and challenged what I found at Mission.

Hellgate High School: Venturing into Diversity

As a Missoula resident, I was familiar with Hellgate High School’s reputation before I began my research there. It is seen by many as Missoula’s “alternative” high school, the place that teenage poets, immigrants, and free spirits with dog collars can be seen smoking on street corners and dancing at the hemp festival. However, it is also academically conservative and rigorous, with numerous Advanced Placement classes and
other opportunities for student challenges. The thought of doing my research here both excited me – because of the school’s apparent open-mindedness and diverse student body – and intimidated me a bit.

My first visit to Hellgate was in December of 1997. I met with the principal, Doug Deason, and the chair of the Social Studies department, Jennifer Copley. To my chagrin, they were quite skeptical of my research; it was only later that I understood clearly that they had expected me to be doing quantitative social science research, rather than the qualitative, narrative project I had designed. I left the meeting with much constructive criticism to ponder, a better developed sense of what I wanted to accomplish through my research, and an impression of Hellgate as a place with deliberate and intelligent, if confronting, administrators.

When I went back for my first day of research, the halls were filled with hurrying students. I noticed flyers for many events on the walls: poetry readings, school dances, career fairs. The school newspaper editors had just published a special “tabloid” edition, and several copies were strewn on benches in the hallway. My impression was of a busy and vibrant student body.

Jennifer Copley, who had agreed to be my “host” teacher, helped me organize a diverse group of students of many ages, backgrounds, and perspectives – ranging from a quiet Hispanic girl from California to a senior whose dad has taught for years at the University. I was impressed with the knowledge and insight that these students demonstrated in our conversation. I was also struck by the helpfulness, friendliness and interest of the staff I contacted. This could, at least in part, be a result of my "gatekeeper:" I was told by several people that Jennifer includes many social justice issues in her curriculum, and she no doubt led me to colleagues with similar commitments.

The people I interviewed echoed many of my impressions about the school. One teacher said that Hellgate has “the wealthiest and poorest families in Missoula, and strong
and weak academic backgrounds," which leads to a great acceptance of diversity at the school. Yet this acceptance is not entirely a result of circumstance; many interviewees described efforts the school has made to support diversity. There is a student group, RESPECT, devoted to fostering respect for diversity, and the previous fall they initiated a school-wide roleplay in which certain students were given arm-bands that signified that they were to be treated differently, in order to give them firsthand experience with discrimination. Hellgate also offers a Blackfeet language and culture class and Native American drumming. And two students I interviewed who had moved into the area from California reported that they saw much more acceptance here than their old school, that "they [staff] want everyone to get along here."

Yet underneath this support, many of my interviewees felt that there was still racism and other forms of discrimination at the school. One Native American student said she felt that "teachers always look at us [Indian students] like we're doing something wrong," and the parent of another felt that even though she taught her children to "do what's right" and report to teachers if they felt they were discriminated against, "what's right isn't being heard" by the teachers. A local Indian activist group, Indian Peoples Action, took these complaints a step further, holding public meetings in the fall of 1997 in which they asked the Missoula school district to address racism against Native American students. And while some of my interviewees felt teachers were responsible for discrimination, other people reported that students were more damaging. One parent reported that other students made hurtful comments to her son, and the English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher reported that foreign students and recent immigrants both face and instigate discrimination.

Finally, I had several teachers and administrators comment on the difficulties many Hellgate students faced outside of school. One teacher lamented that "an increasing number of kids come from really, truly nonsupportive families," and a counselor told me that he sees kids coming from abusive situations, which are sometimes unknowingly
exacerbated when the students are given a hard time at school as well. "They come in primed, and we respond and react instead of understanding them and trying to work with it," he lamented.

Hellgate seemed to be a place that attracts, celebrates and molds bright students from many backgrounds. Teachers, administrators, parents and the students themselves demonstrated a genuine commitment to learning and to tolerance, and students take initiative to do things important to them. (Hellgate's student-run environmental group, S.A.V.E., was entirely organized by students and has been in existence for ten years.) Still, Hellgate's diversity brings with it tension and discrimination which still have the potential to make life difficult and painful for some students.

**Understanding at Hellgate: Delving into the Depths**

Students at Hellgate, even those who had not previously heard of EJ, showed a remarkably sophisticated understanding of the concept. Two people in the first, mixed-age group I interviewed were able to generate definitions of EJ before I shared mine; one stated accurately that EJ involved compensating for a policy of "leniency toward large company interest groups - they avoid environmental fines and things because of their power." This group was also able to generate regional and national examples of EJ issues once I shared my definitions. These included nuclear testing in Nevada and rainforest destruction, as well as more specific examples that students knew about from their families - one person's father was writing a book about the coverup of the fact that a plane containing nuclear weapons had crashed in Greenland in the 1970s, causing (according to this student) 90% of the people in the nearby communities to die of cancer. Another said her uncle worked for Bonneville Power Authority in the Columbia Basin, where treaties with Native tribes for fish harvesting were being ignored in the interest of generating more hydroelectric power. The students in this group were thoughtful and unwilling to make blanket statements without more information; they asked many
questions and at least four expressed that “I can’t make a conclusion as to whether it really exists” without studying the issue further.

My conversations with the other two groups did not reveal as deep an understanding of ER/EJ and related issues, but they were insightful. I met with two Hispanic students who had recently moved from California and who saw huge differences between their old and new schools. These students described having to wear see-through backpacks so they couldn’t bring weapons or drugs to school, and gang wars that could be instigated by something as small as a stray comment. Although they didn’t label it as such, it was clear that their personal experience in California included environmental justice issues.

“It’s just a big old dump” where one used to live, she told me, with oil dumped in the road and cars smoking everywhere. She described the ghettoization of her city: “When you get money, you leave because you’re afraid people will steal from you. Then the people who are left care even less, and there’s a new ghetto.” Her comment led to a discussion of drugs in their towns; both students saw drugs as a major part of the problem, but couldn’t identify why they were more prevalent in Southern California: “It’s just different environments. I don’t know why there are more there; maybe because it’s near Mexico.” Both students commented on the peacefulness of Montana and the fact that they felt much safer here, but they acknowledged that many of their old friends would find it boring. “I think it’s funner down there,” one said, but the other interjected, “There’s more bad stuff too. When you’re having fun something’s always going to go bad.”

My third focus group consisted of six underclassmen, mostly female. They immediately embraced the concept as describing real situations. One, a freshwoman with spiked hair and a dog collar, felt it was “so obvious... the people who can’t see it must be oblivious.” Another poignantly described ER/EJ as being “like a family secret that everyone knows but they don’t talk about.” The concept of EJ seemed to resonate with students on an unconscious level – though they had not heard the term, they responded
immediately. This group’s examples were mostly about racial issues: police brutality against people of color, police being concentrated in certain neighborhoods, and people who can’t get jobs because of their physical appearance.

Half of the six Hellgate teachers I interviewed—Tom Graff, an English teacher and coordinator of Hellgate’s student environmental group, English teacher Harry Gadbow, and Blackfeet teacher Leo Bird—had a prior understanding of ER and EJ, and each of them gave definitions that were both accurate and “deep” in the sense of Deep Ecology. Tom saw ER as “a concept that... makes sense out of terribly disparate circumstances,” citing examples like uranium mines on the Navajo reservation and poverty-stricken former coal-mining towns where the coal had run out. After pondering my definitions further, he also mentioned a Harper’s Magazine article which argued that the moneyed class in America controls most decisions, even though most Americans staunchly deny the existence of a class structure here. “Part of that class structure is putting toxics out where the poor people live, precisely because they’ve been marginalized,” Tom told me, echoing almost exactly the ideology of the EJ movement. Leo shied away from the term “justice,” saying Indian people haven’t exactly received justice in the past, but he expressed a deep cultural feeling that people needed to live in balance with and with reverence for the natural world. Harry Gadbow, who is not Native, gave a similar definition of EJ as “the ultimate environmental sense, the Native American sense: we are all part of the Earth... we’re an integral part of it, the things on Earth are our relatives.” He referred to the social movements of the 1960s as a precursor to EJM: “I always say the things I believe in most became real in the ’60s and are real forces trying to change a monolithic structure.”

Although the other three teachers I interviewed did not have as clear a baseline understanding of ER/EJ, all teachers responded favorably to the ideas and generated some definition of ER or EJ. Nancy Larum, the ESL teacher, responded immediately to the racial component of ER/EJ, saying that “you don’t realize the ‘perks’ you have
because you're white" until you're made aware of ER and other issues. Other teachers, by contrast, initially seemed to see little connection between ER and EJ and assumed that EJ had to do only with the nonhuman environment. Greg Lenihan, for example, saw EJ as "justice for the environment," separate from any human judgment about their own environment, and Wayne Beddow thought EJ had to do with "tree-huggers," those who defended the environment. Greg also pointed out, as did others, that classism as well as racism could be an issue in environmental discrimination.

The examples of ED/EJ offered by Hellgate teachers were primarily national or global in scale. Wayne Beddow mentioned urban ghettos and the fact that residents were pushed out when downtown areas were restored; Jeanne Cox talked about disease in Third World countries, and Tom Graff discussed poverty in the Deep South and on Indian reservations. There were two examples of local issues – Greg Lenihan mentioned issues of tribal sovereignty on the Flathead Reservation, while Nancy Larum was most interested in racism in the school environment itself.

Administrators at Hellgate expressed that while they had not heard of an EJ frame per se, the issues it was concerned with were familiar to them. Robert Holden, the Assistant Principal, showed the most sophisticated understanding of EJ. "It defines environment as the space where we live, our relationships, taking care of that space – you can't assume 'environment' is just natural resources," he expressed, and reminded me that the judgment of whether a place has achieved environmental justice has to come from within the community’s own standards. Doug Deason, Hellgate’s principal, told me that he had not heard of the term EJ, but the examples he gave – described below – indicated that he had given considerable thought to the interface of human and environmental needs and was familiar with the questions raised by an EJ frame.

Administrators were able to see the profound critique of society that an EJ perspective requires. Carol Holte, a school psychologist, told me that "we succeed by dominating" in modern American society, and that ER is "much more than just a momentary bias." In
other words, she saw the way in which American society is set up to dominate and discriminate against the poor, nonwhites, women, and anyone else who doesn't fit a particular model of success. Indian Education Coordinator Carole Meyers had the following response to my definitions:

Society doesn't want to face it. We don't want to look at the mistakes the "white majority" has made. It's like a black eye or a stepchild. It's a very dysfunctional system. Then when you do say something, it's like, "How dare you? Now we have to deal with this issue."

Carole saw ED/EJ as an important issue, but recognized that most people are unwilling to deal with it. She, along with counselor Dennis Radtke, also saw ED/EJ through a psychological lens; Dennis, for instance, saw EJ as fostering a "climate where there's mutual respect, where people can deal with issues constructively." They saw the current system, in psychological terms, as dysfunctional, and they envisioned a psychologically functional system for the future.

Administrators offered examples of EJ issues that ranged from local to global, and evidenced a thorough understanding of EJ issues as those which combine environmental concerns with the complicated needs and rights of human beings. Carol Holte was concerned about people in Missoula whose basic needs aren't met ("that is their environment," she pointed out), and counselor Dennis Radtke lamented the fact that kids of color at Hellgate are treated as if they're mainstream white students. They, like Nancy Larum, were interested in the immediate environment of the school. Carole Meyers, who is Native American, also offered a personal perspective, saying she had friends who couldn't get adequate housing in Missoula because of their race. Principal Douglas Deason gave examples of the Butte copper mine, and then pointed out the complex EJ concerns in issues such as overpopulation in China or the fate of African wildlife. "You need to understand the personal perspective" of the people who either cause or are victims of environmental injustice, he told me — it doesn't work to make a blanket judgment about what is best either for a particular environment or a particular group of people.
Again, my sample size for parents at Hellgate is small; I interviewed three parents, and two of these were also teachers so they did not respond to all questions from a parent’s perspective. Because all of the parents I interviewed had Indian children, they saw ER primarily as an issue of racial discrimination, whether or not there was a strong environmental component. Ann Bauer, however, did point out that “it’s not just color, it’s where you come from.” These parents saw discrimination against Native kids who honored their cultural traditions as a major ER concern, and Leo Bird pointed out that even on reservations, cultural traditions have been difficult to pass on because the culture was systematically disrupted for so long. These parents were trying to raise their children in a world that does not always treat them with justice, environmental or otherwise, and so they saw EJ as an issue that affected their families in very personal ways.

I found that, although Hellgate interviewees were not familiar with the concepts of ER/EJ, they demonstrated an ability to look deeply at EJ issues and seemed to understand almost instinctively what I was talking about. Although some examples they offered were more racial than environmental, or vice versa, most showed a strong insight into the principles of EJ. With the exception of parents, whose Indian children dealt with racism in a very personal way, most of the examples that Hellgate participants gave me were regional or national in scope, and interviewees engaged the moral questions around these examples during their interviews.

**Application at Hellgate: Heading for the Future**

As part of a discussion on current application of EJ at Hellgate, I asked students what they felt was important to learn. Students had a range of subjects that they felt were important, but the emphasis was on courses that would prepare them for the world: college preparation, child care, cooking, applied math. One even suggested replacing history with a “future class” where you could predict what would happen in the world
and learn how to deal with it. Students in the first group, especially, mentioned the importance of “charismatic teachers” “who seem to enjoy what they do,” and many students were excited by field trips, group activities, and anything that allowed them to think independently. They recognized that much of their learning was outside the formal classroom structure; one girl mentioned “peer interaction, and speaking in front of people in different situations” as important learning experiences, and many in my third focus group saw being with friends and having freedom to spend time off campus as integral to their high school experience.

Students had mixed opinions as to the importance of learning about social justice and environmental issues. One arguably cynical ninth-grader wanted to learn about social issues because “we shouldn’t have blinders on, think that everything’s happy and picture-perfect when it isn’t.” She and others wanted to be prepared for the “real world,” though another student conceded that there was no way to be truly prepared. Yet this same ninth-grader didn’t want to learn about environmental issues because “even if you know about it, there’s nothing you can do. One person can’t change the world, just complain.” Other students were concerned that learning about social and environmental issues could lead to more anger. But the majority, especially in the first group, saw these issues as “at the forefront of every issue we face” and wanted to learn more.

Students identified many topics they’d learned in school that related to social and environmental concerns. They had studied water quality in the Clark Fork and learned about AIDS as part of biology, learned about nuclear test sites in Nevada and studied poverty in geography, and listened to guest speakers during Hellgate’s student-organized Earth Week celebration. With the exception of the Clark Fork, most of the topics were national rather than local or regional in focus, and they were studied primarily within the classroom.

As at Mission, in the area of application many teachers listed basic academic skills among the things they thought their students should learn: reading and writing skills,
mathematics, critical thinking, skills to "mainstream" foreign students. Like Mission
teachers, Hellgate faculty seemed concerned with preparing students for the future and
allowing them to reach their "maximum potential," according to Nancy Larum. But the
overwhelming majority of responses had to do with social skills and values. Harry
Gadbow listed ethics and community values as important, Leo Bird talked about invoking
the "real meaning" of life with his students, and science teacher Jeanne Cox said "holistic
thinking" was a priority in her teaching:

I'd rather approach education holistically than make them all scientists. . . . The
hidden things are important - respect, manners, communication skills. I think they're
probably going to forget the facts, so I'm interested in the process.

Far from shying away from teaching values, the teachers I interviewed wanted to instill in
their students values that would help them become responsible members of society.

Not surprisingly, given these responses, all felt that environmental and social justice
issues were "extremely important" (in the words of Harry Gadbow) to teach. Greg
Lenihan saw teaching these issues as integral to his goal of teaching compassion:

It comes out of compassion for others, because what you do in terms of your own
personal lifestyle absolutely affects what happens to the environment. I see that with
social justice too - compassion is social justice.

Although not named as such by teachers, environmental justice issues are present in
Hellgate's curriculum. ESL teacher Nancy Larum, especially, teaches her students about
prejudice, hunger, cultural superiority and its effects on the lives of people, and other EJ-
related issues. And Leo Bird, who teaches both biology and Blackfeet language and
culture, infuses what I would consider EJ issues into his entire curriculum. He uses his
native language and culture to teach concepts:

So the way I like to do it is, to teach a language I like to stimulate all senses, and also
bring in the difficult teachings from our animals that are in there, each one of them. . .
. When we first came in as Blackfeet, we learned from the animals how to live. We
made a lot of mistakes, and we talk about them.
Leo told me that he teaches respect for people and the land through this Native cultural history. He also uses the deep meanings behind Blackfeet words to teach students a sense of compassion and responsibility.

Other teachers mentioned subjects that they had taught which touch on environmental issues or social justice. Tom Graff exposes many students to environmental concepts during Earth Week, and Jeanne Cox told me that she “tr[ies] to connect anything in my curriculum to the environment,” including things like acid rain, air pollution, and water quality. Harry Gadbow talked about the “myth of the West” in his class, and also mentioned a “Waging Peace” class that had been given at Hellgate. Most of these topics would fall under more traditional environmental education or social justice, but by including them in their curriculum Hellgate teachers demonstrated that they are open to teaching issues related to EJ.

Unfortunately, when I discussed application with administrators, I did not ask all administrators what they thought was important for students to learn. Of the ones I did, answers varied but all were focused on a “big-picture” view of what kids would need for the future. Doug Deason named safety as his number one priority for the school, and listed three things he felt were important for students to learn: a core academic curriculum, “the concept of the world of work,” and social skills. Robert Holden wanted to “give kids skills for the future,” such things as facility with technology, an appreciation for change, and the ability to think critically. He, too, saw social skills as important but was concerned that the school was being asked to replace home morality. Carol Meyers, the Indian Education Coordinator, was more concerned with the accuracy of information students received about things like Native American history.

All the administrators I asked felt social justice and environmental issues were important; Carole Meyers felt they “rank in the top 10 if not higher” of things students should learn. But most wanted to make sure that the school didn’t become the advocate of a particular point of view. “Whose standard of ethical behavior and morality do you
utilize as your base for instruction?” Robert Holden pondered. “You try to present in a very valid fashion each of the sides” to an issue. Similarly, Doug Deason encouraged me “to separate moral judgment... from the ideas of what you’re doing in the academic arena, searching for fact under scrutiny.”

Administrators did not give me many specific examples of EJ issues being taught at Hellgate. Doug Deason felt that “the schools are doing an excellent job” of teaching environmental issues, but neither he nor any other administrator specifically mentioned EJ in the curriculum.

The themes that emerged from my few parent interviewees about what they want their children to learn were, echoing other interviewees, twofold: academic skills so students are ready for higher education or the world of work, and social skills such as fairness, self-discipline, and respect. Ann Bauer, for example, wanted her son to be able to “take [his values] to school with him” and be able to explore his Indian heritage there without fear of retribution from other students. Parents could not identify anything in their children’s curriculum that was related to EJ, but they saw their children grapple with social issues on a daily basis. “Just walking down the hall without pain” inflicted by other students is a lesson one parent said her son was learning, but she was concerned that “education isn’t enough to make a difference on its own.”

When asked about applying EJ education in the context of their current priorities and programs, people I spoke with at Hellgate saw academic skills and skills that prepare students for the future as important, but they also felt strongly that social skills and values should be an integral part of the curriculum. Almost everyone felt social and environmental issues were important for students to learn, and those who didn’t were not philosophically opposed to such teaching but wondered if it could make a difference. Interviewees were able to generate examples of social and environmental topics in the curriculum, but only a few saw topics in the current curriculum which related directly to EJ.
Suggestions at Hellgate: Open-minded Exploration

Students suggested wide range of goals arising out of EJ education. Some felt that it was the only way to actually stop environmental discrimination from occurring by teaching them the consequences of their actions, and that a comprehensive program would mean “it (ED) would be pretty close to gone in 10 years.” But others were less hopeful, reminding me that “this country was founded on racism” and “you’d still keep putting things somewhere else” even if you knew about the damage it did. A few students felt that important priorities of Americans today would be reachable if EJ were taught – that industry would be cleaner and there would be more jobs available. The overall goal seemed to be that things would be “better for the next generation,” as one freshman said.

Hellgate students envisioned many ways of effectively learning about EJ issues. Like their counterparts at Mission, they wanted to move beyond book learning and do field trips, debates, and interviews with local people or guest speakers. Every group mentioned the importance of having “motivated, well-informed” teachers who “don’t already have their own opinion formed.” And students were conflicted over where to integrate EJ into the curriculum; one mentioned a separate class, others envisioned it as part of a biology or earth science curriculum, and still others wondered if there could be a separate day or week singled out for EJ, much like the current Earth Week.

Students’ biggest concerns were about teacher buy-in. “If they cared enough, we’d be learning it now,” one student pointed out. People were afraid that teachers would be racist or closed-minded and unwilling to teach EJ because “they might think people deserve it.” And some students were cynical about the impact it would have on people’s behavior, lamenting that “nothing will change, because people will think what they want.”
When I asked teachers what the goal of EJ education would be, most talked about the changes they expected in the way people responded to others. They saw empathy, "a sense of social activism," respect, and "a caring change in human consciousness" as goals. But teachers saw the end result of these changes in different ways. Some, such as Jeanne Cox and Nancy Larum, saw it as a way to perfect the capitalist system already in place by making things more equal. Nancy envisioned a world in which there would be no more poverty, "people would be cared for" as a way of life, and therefore "we might be able to make more progress because we wouldn't have to deal with these life issues. We could move on with new inventions, exploring new worlds." Others felt that EJ would challenge that capitalist system; Wayne Beddow wanted to "teach that the Earth isn't renewable - we're temporary." Leo Bird, also, talked about a sense of respect and a carrying on of Indian traditions that seemed at odds with, if not contradictory to, the current capitalist system.

In addition to echoing the suggestions of other groups - deal with real-life, hands on issues, integrate EJ into many subject areas, get outside the classroom, hear all sides of the debate and let students choose, and make sure teachers are excited about the issue - Hellgate teachers had a few suggestions I had not heard from others. Jeanne Cox pointed out the importance of group-building activities in the classroom, so students felt like they had the space and support to express their feelings. Echoing a suggestion I heard from Hellgate students, Wayne Beddow wondered if there was a "fundamental issue" at the center of the movement that a curriculum could be built from. Leo Bird and Harry Gadbow both urged a focus on Native American culture. Harry suggested using Native poetry, which demonstrates "a visceral and real understanding of how connected they are" to the natural world. Leo Bird, similarly, talked about using his native language and culture to pass on EJ ideas, and when I asked him how a non-Native might convey the same ideas, his response was "come to the Blackfeet people and learn - our knowledge is free." (I did, in fact, accept this invitation and became part of a class he taught for
Hellgate teachers. Teachers seemed excited about the prospect of teaching EJ, however it was integrated.

Again echoing other groups' responses, Hellgate teachers were concerned about becoming "the mouthpiece for an environmental organization," offering propaganda or a hidden agenda instead of allowing students to freely debate and choose a point of view on EJ issues. Similarly, they were concerned about parents, administration or kids who would see even appropriate teaching about EJ as propaganda, who had "prejudice against the words environmental and environmentalist," according to Harry Gadbow. Two of my interviewees also mentioned logistical concerns: no money for field trips, unruly classes, no more room in the curriculum.

As at Mission, administrators' suggested goals could be seen within the EE framework of awareness, understanding, and responsibility; these administrators did not focus on the fourth component of action. Carol Holte wanted to increase awareness, to "bring culture to Montana, since these kids aren't as culturally exposed as kids in other states." She also wanted students to be more informed, and Doug Deason expressed that he saw a goal as teaching kids to "know why they make decisions and the consequences of them - understand the costs." Robert Holden, in particular, engaged questions of responsibility that he wanted to see kids grapple with:

If it's in Roxbury, Massachusetts, what's the responsibility of people in Missoula, MT to that community? Is it moral support, financial support to help establish that? . . . How far does a community extend to assist another community? That basically became the question with the human rights movement . . . If nonaffected populations didn't support blacks, change wouldn't have occurred. That's an idea of social justice.

Administrators wanted students to be exposed to EJ issues, to have an understanding of what's behind the issues, and to engage the moral questions that arise from an EJ frame.

As other groups, administrators wanted to see tangible and hands-on projects using real people as resources in EJ education - as Dennis Radtke told me, "the key element is

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12He is referring to the example given on my definition sheet. (Appendix 2)
connecting.” Doug Deason stressed the importance of discussing complex issues, and both he and Robert Holden were adamant that students needed to be presented with many sides of an issue and allowed to freely choose their own point of view. And Carol Holte suggested bringing the issues back to Hellgate students themselves, sensitizing them to racism and “understanding sources of racism at Hellgate.”

The biggest concern among administrators was the danger of indoctrinating students or telling them how to think about EJ issues. Even if teachers avoided this, administrators recognized that parents or others might feel indoctrination was going on. As Robert Holden put it, “you have to plan your path wisely when you teach something uncomfortable.” Finally, administrators expressed some cynicism that kids would be fundamentally changed and made more responsible by EJ education. “It’s just not that realistic now,” Carol Holte told me.

The parents I interviewed discussed the goals of EJ primarily in terms of making a difference for their children personally. One expressed that the main goal was that “each child would really have an equal opportunity,” and another wanted EJ to encourage students to “bring back their culture and take out the racism.” Still, the first parent also wanted students to see themselves as stewards of the world and act responsibly.

Like science teacher Jeanne Cox, one of my parent interviewees stressed “building credibility with kids” as important in implementing an EJ curriculum. Most of the other parent suggestions revolved around the atmosphere of the school itself. “You have to create an acceptance culture in the school first,” one told me. Ann Bauer said it was important to address cultural differences in kids, but not to allow those differences to lead to negative attention. She suggested a model similar to an Indian People’s Action workshop she had attended, where Indian and non-Indians shared their experiences about growing up and racism; she felt the discussion had led to much more compassion and understanding among the participants. And she saw the importance of including parents
in any education for tolerance, since students learn many of their attitudes and behaviors at home.

Like others, Hellgate parents were concerned about the danger of “becoming the mouthpiece of one point of view.” They also saw that kids might be cynical about the power of EJ education, asking “What does this matter to me?” because they were still dealing with such personal experiences of racism and weren’t ready to see the larger context. One parent recognized the resistance that the community might have to EJ education because “it threatens someone’s sense of entrenched right and power,” and she also warned me not to rob kids of hope by painting a bleak picture of environmental discrimination in the world.

In the area of suggestions, my Hellgate interviewees saw a range of goals in EJ education, ranging from more awareness and knowledge, to fostering values of respect and empathy, to encouraging actions on the part of students that could make a real difference in the lives of victims of environmental discrimination. All participants offered specific suggestions for how EJ could be taught, and – as at Mission – they stressed hands-on, community-oriented learning that enabled students to powerfully engage the difficult questions that arise in looking at EJ issues. They were particularly adamant that teachers needed to be open-minded and genuinely interested in teaching about and for EJ. Finally, they saw some barriers to teaching EJ. These ranged from logistical and financial concerns – a relative minority of the concerns mentioned – to the dangers of indoctrinating students or pushing a particular point of view.
CHAPTER FOUR: REFLECTING ON THE JOURNEY

I am almost ready to embark on the next phase: making sense of what I've heard, conveying it. How do I synthesize the many, diverse voices I've heard? I honestly have no idea how it will be. ... May my words and insights reach where they need to, and may I honor what people have shared with me.

Research journal, 4/7/98

Although each person I interviewed had their own unique perspective on education and environmental justice, patterns emerged among their responses that linked together the ideas of each school and population. These "generative themes," to borrow Friere's term, help paint a rich picture of the understanding of environmental justice education, application of EJ, and suggestions for expanding it in these western Montana schools.

In this section I will synthesize the major themes I found according to the three questions that I asked initially. I will examine the similarities and differences among responses from the two schools and, where appropriate, from students, teachers, parents and administrators across the two schools. I will then offer recommendations for future approaches to EJ education in public schools based on my findings. Throughout this analysis, my goal was to further environmental justice in the world and to honor the voices of those I spoke with; my purpose was to understand how to effectively teach EJ in public schools.

Understanding: Deepening the Journey

Several themes emerged from participants' understanding of ER and EJ. I found that many people initially saw little relationship between ER and EJ, and which term they felt more comfortable with depended on their own perspective. At Hellgate, I saw more of an intellectual engagement with the terms, where Mission participants related to them more personally. Those people with a self-professed spiritual grounding tended to adopt a discourse about EJ that was "deeper" - their responses were more detailed and broader.
And I found a sharp split between those who saw EJ as environmental equity – making improvements to the existing system – and environmental justice, which requires more profound social changes.

Understanding of the terms “environmental justice” and “environmental racism” varied widely among my interviewees. I found that very few students were aware of the term, although many recognized ED as an issue once definitions had been shared. Among adults, teachers and administrators had a more thorough understanding than parents. Overall, 13 of the 28 adults I interviewed were able to generate definitions (before I shared mine) of ER or EJ which included at least two of the major points of my definition. I found that many interviewees gave a more accurate definition of ER than EJ, and those participants who had an interest in racism or social justice spent more time talking and asking about ER. By contrast, individuals – particularly teachers, like John Ligas at Mission and Greg Lenihan at Hellgate – who were well-versed in more traditional environmentalism talked more extensively about EJ and ER, and offered definitions of EJ that had more to do with justice for the natural environment than for humans. On the other hand, I found that some of these teachers resisted the linkage of racial or class issues to environmental issues.

Different patterns of understanding emerged at each school. At Hellgate, the administration in particular – most notably the principal and assistant principal – demonstrated a strong understanding of EJ and the ability to discuss often complex examples of EJ issues. Principal Doug Deason, for instance, delved into the complex and controversial nature of EJ issues with an example from Africa:

There’s a dilemma in Africa with the wild herds of animals. For Americans it seems simple: preserve the herds and let them run free. If that’s really how we feel, we should turn Nebraska back into grasslands – but are we likely to? In Africa, do we kill off people to save animals? Are they allowed to live and to increase their economic standards? Those are not easy questions.

Teachers were also able to give me examples of EJ issues, from oil wells to the slums of Mexico. But perhaps most striking was the way in which Hellgate student interviewees
engaged in understanding ER/EJ. Their level of intellectual curiosity and maturity was remarkable. Although few students were familiar with my terms, they quickly found accurate examples of ER and EJ and engaged in a lively discussion about them. More even than their examples – which ranged from radiation in Greenland to fish populations and treaties in Washington – I was struck by the ability of the students to see subtleties and complexities in EJ issues. One remarked that “we’re so detached from it that it’s easily dismissed,” and talked about how difficult the issues could be to distinguish. Another wondered aloud how to make EJ more succinct so it could be grasped by many students, without diluting the issues themselves. The two students who had recently moved from California, although they did not talk at length about EJ per se, were incredibly generous and articulate with me about the differences they saw between their old homes and Montana. They described drugs in their old towns, places that were “just a big old dump.” When I asked them why they were glad they’d moved to Montana, even though it was “boring” compared to California, they told me that “It’s funner down there, but there’s more bad stuff too. When you’re having fun something’s always going to go bad.” In Montana, by contrast, one said that “just spending some time here alone, I knew if I stayed in school here, I can make something of my life.” These students were living examples of the need for EJ, the difference that environment can have on young people’s lives, and they were able and willing to share their experiences in a thoughtful way.

At Mission I experienced understanding of a different kind. Missing, particularly among my first and third groups of students, was the same level of intellectual rigor that I felt at Hellgate. But in its place was a very visceral, personal engagement with EJ as a frame. Where Hellgate interviewees saw EJ as something that happened far away – Africa or Mexico, for example – Mission participants took my questions personally. My first experience of this was on my first day of interviews, when I encountered students resistant to the idea of EJ. Although I can only speculate as to the source of that
resistance, it was not something that these students backed up with intellectual arguments or even well-articulated opinions. Instead it was something that seemed to affect them very personally, to the point where some were not able to listen to my questions — when I asked if they understood the definitions, one responded by telling me how perfect the government was. The examples students offered of EJ were personal as well: eighteen money, tribal sovereignty, and other issues that they or their parents had been personally involved in. And these issues were just as likely to be reverse environmental racism — situations in which non-Indians on the reservation felt that they were somehow treated unfairly — as racism against Native people.

This personal experience of ER/EJ was present in my interviews with adults as well. It was most evident in talking with Lynn Vanderberg, who had experienced difficulty teaching about EJ issues in the past because of resistance from white parents and school board members. She elaborated extensively on this experience with me, and also gave examples in her personal life of ER/EJ: farmers illegally rerouting streams on her property, the timber company in her childhood town distributing propaganda to schools. Other teachers didn’t have as many personal experiences to offer, but they almost universally responded to my definitions in a personal way. Two, for instance, immediately responded to the definition of ER by saying that “I don’t like to dwell on examples of racism” in the classroom, preferring to be “colorblind.” These teachers, whether consciously or unconsciously, equated teaching about environmental discrimination with emphasizing racial issues or problems in their own classrooms.

Across both schools, I found that those people who were Native, had Native family members, or included any form of spirituality in their responses to me tended to generate more detailed and broad definitions of ER and EJ. For instance, parent Dale Morrow, who felt that ultimately “what really has to be taught is a love for our Creator,” was able to immediately give a definition of EJ:
One of the things is that each person and each organization and each country has to be responsible for what they're emitting, they can't expect someone else to clean up their mess. . . . It definitely challenges the major economic interests in this country and also is very opposed to the status quo.

This definition is in contrast to the brief guesses that some other interviewees offered, like "tree-hugging" or "the ultimate environmental sense"—responses that were still useful but did not demonstrate the same breadth or depth as Dale's. And both Native teachers I interviewed, George Price at Mission and Leo Bird at Hellgate, indicated they saw EJ as far more than just a human issue. Leo, in particular, used our interview to talk about the traditional knowledge and land relationship of his people and about how that's changing:

... we look at things in a different manner. We utilize it differently. We don't put a monetary value on it, traditional people, but we do have aspects of our people who do. They look at timber, grassland, all that as a money maker. But we as traditional people look at traditional grasses that the buffalo ate, the stewards of our grasses. They'd only eat certain grasses and saved the long ones for nesting birds. Then they put cows in and destroyed the land. But traditional people, we try to keep our land the old way.

Leo's response is not explicitly about discrimination against or justice for his people. He does not speak, as, for instance, the Principles of Environmental Justice (1991) do, about the "rights" demanded by the Blackfeet. His perspective, rather, emphasizes a difference in values between "traditional" and non-traditional people. Although he does not say this directly, Leo seems to see environmental justice as a concept that encompasses an entire worldview or attitude with regard to humans' place on the planet. To him, EJ means respecting the land, saving the grasses that his people know are important for the whole ecosystem.

The exceptions I found were with parents of Indian students and Indian students themselves. Only one of the five parents at the two schools could generate an accurate definition of ER/EJ, and I found that, in contrast to the wide view of EJ expressed by Indian teachers, parents I spoke with were concerned primarily with racism. Rather than looking more generally at instances of environmental racism in the community, they were
concerned about the safety and upbringing of their own children. One told me that her son couldn't walk down the hallway at school without being teased, and another said her son had felt forced to fight a racist classmate when teachers ignored his concerns.

Absorbed in the day-to-day coping strategies of their children, these parents were interested in equity - equal treatment for their offspring in the school environment. Like the residents of Texarkana or other EJ activists in the early stages of activism, parents did not have the perspective to look beyond their immediate situation. Indian students, on the other hand, did not emphasize issues of race but gave short answers to all my questions. They seemed unwilling to open themselves to me and expressed that they didn't feel race was an issue in their community; one offered that "I get along with everyone."

I saw a clear distinction between people who saw EJ more as environmental equity - that reworking the current system could have it work for everyone - and those who saw it as a fundamental shift in the status quo. Almost all teachers at Hellgate and many at Mission saw EJ in this broader way, as something that challenged current priorities and worldviews in our culture. Hellgate teacher Tom Graff discussed at length a Harper's magazine article he'd read that demonstrated that America has a firmly entrenched class structure. "The moneyed class controls what's going on," he said:

The obvious corollary is that people with economic power aren't going to want nuclear waste in their backyard. I don't either, but I won't vote for them or use them. I've been opposed to them forever. Some categories of society get derided as being NIMBYs ["Not in My Backyard"]. Certainly that's a factor, but there are also lots of us that try to live more sustainable lives.

In other words, Tom is pointing out that in order to have nuclear waste out of everyone's backyard, people need to be consistent and not vote for or use nuclear power at all. True EJ, to Tom, requires a change in people's priorities, not just redistribution of wealth. At least ten of my adult interviewees, seven of them teachers, expressed similar views.

By contrast, most parents - especially Indian parents - approached the issue as one of equity, of equal treatment under the current system. I found a similar response from other interviewees, particularly among administrators and people worked with students
who were at a disadvantage in the school system. Administrators like Carole Meyers, who coordinates Missoula’s Title XI Indian Education program, saw the goal of EJ education as creating “more of an acceptance of people who are not like them [students]” – an inclusion of people who are different into the advantages enjoyed by those in power. The most pronounced example of this came from Hellgate’s ESL teacher Nancy Larum. When I asked her what she saw as the ultimate goal of EJ and EJ education, she responded:

There wouldn’t be poverty or need. Food distribution and wealth distribution would be less difficult. People would be cared for. We might be able to make more progress because we wouldn’t have to deal with life issues. We could move on with new inventions, exploring new worlds.

Nancy envisioned a world in which more equal distribution of wealth and power frees people and societies to forward the goals they already work towards: new inventions and new explorations. She did not, however, engage the question of whether a world with equal distribution of power and wealth would have the same goals, or whether a shift of power to the people Friere refers to as “the oppressed” might bring with it a change in priorities.

I found that many students, particularly at Mission, shared this environmental equity perspective. One told me that “if you give something to one, that gives injustice to another” no matter what. Others went a step further, arguing that environmental injustice really wasn’t a concern because “no matter what you do, someone will be unhappy,” or “it’s a choice” and not a necessity to live near environmental toxins. These students, while they seemed to understand the concept of ER and EJ, did not see it as an issue that could be realistically addressed.

I found that as a group only those people who had Indian family members or close friends – regardless of the category of interviewee – were consistently familiar with ER and/or EJ before I shared my definitions. However, I found almost everyone – with the exception of my first group of student interviewees at Mission – was able to generate
examples of EJ. While the conversations about understanding at Hellgate were intellectually stimulating, I found at Mission a very personal sense of ER and EJ in people’s lives. Finally, in assessing my interviewees’ understanding of the terms, I found marked contrasts between those people who saw EJ as equity and those who saw it as justice.

**Application: Setting Out into the World**

In the area of application, I asked participants what goals and priorities they had for students at their school, whether those included the teaching of social justice or environmental topics or skills, and whether environmental justice was currently taught in any form. Both schools felt that “real-world” skills and social skills were as important as academic skills, and saw EJ education as related to the first two categories. They understood that they needed to teach skills that would help students survive in a quickly-changing world. Yet they did not express a commitment to empowering students to create change in the world, and examples of EJ in the curriculum were few.

Before I asked my interviewees what EJ-related topics they already taught, I wanted to find out what their educational priorities were – what they felt was important for students at their school to come away with. The answers they gave were startlingly consistent. At both schools, and among all populations, my interviewees listed three related categories of skills that they wanted students to have: basic academic skills, skills for coping with the “real world,” and social skills. Almost no one I interviewed listed particular content areas that they felt were necessary, although two Native parents wanted changes in the history curriculum to reflect the importance of Native culture in America. Other responses fit one of the three skills listed above.

The basic academic skills thought important by interviewees were primarily math and English/communication skills. Several people in each category also mentioned history, “so that we can learn from past mistakes.” Of those who listed science as important –
primarily students and science teachers – almost all mentioned only biology. Five
interviewees also listed current events as important for students to learn. With the
exception of math and possibly biology, all of these topics relate to environmental justice
education. History, particularly (as several respondents mentioned) the history of
minority groups such as Native Americans, is important in understanding environmental
injustice in the past. Current events studies allow students to engage in these issues in
their world today, and communications skills allow them to express themselves and have
an impact in these real-world issues. The priority of these issues in the responses I
received indicates that members of the school community would be open to and aligned
with teaching about EJ.

The skills that participants, primarily parents and administrators, listed as important
for their children’s future were those that, in the words of one interviewee, would
“prepare them for the world of work.” They included the ability to understand
technology, balance a checkbook, and find an apartment – basic, hands-on skills that
students needed to survive in a fast-paced world. Included in these lists also, particularly
by administrators, was the ability to think critically and discern reliable from unreliable
information. “How much information can you gain off the Internet?” a Hellgate
administrator asked me. “It’s phenomenal. How much of it is valid, and how much just
a person’s perspective?... Can we discern that?” The superintendent of Mission echoed
these sentiments almost exactly. These interviewees wanted young people to be able to
make appropriate judgment calls about the information and issues they deal with.

What I heard from many interviewees, both in what they said directly and in their
comments about providing students with the skills to survive as adults, is that they see
the world as a fast-paced, quickly changing place that is difficult for students to thrive in.
Hellgate teacher Tom Graff, for example, said that he sees many kids coming from
difficult home situations and a “fragmented society.” Hellgate assistant principle Robert
Holden illustrated this change in society with an example:
There’s a lot of question about things that used to be clear... You always considered respect for the elderly. I mean it was, You Will. It was universally understood that you would respect, take care of, and support the elderly. Over time it’s become “why should we?”... We’ve become self-centered and so we lose traditional standards of what is ethical and moral.

Respondents were concerned about this fragmentation of society and its effects on young people, and they felt like the school could address that through teaching particular skills and/or values, although one administrator did warn that “the school can’t fix all the problems these kids face – it takes systemic intervention.” I found that parents, teachers, and administrators were very willing to see values and social skills taught in a school setting. The values they listed were things like ethics, community values, compassion, respect for diverse cultures, responsibility, and a sense of spirituality. Given well-publicized resistance nationwide to the teaching of values in the classroom, it was encouraging to see that teachers, administrators, and parents at both schools saw these values as appropriate to teach, and in fact showed a commitment to addressing them in the classroom. (This could, of course, be a result of my biased sample and might not be generalizable to the entire schools.) On the other hand, students themselves did not list values as an important part of their education; they did, though, list related ideas like the social skills to deal with racism.

All of the values and social skills listed would be well-aligned with EJ education. Respect for diverse cultures, community values, and compassion would lead people to consider more highly the needs of victims of environmental discrimination. Grounding in ethics would allow them to carefully consider the ethical implications for other people of choices they made. And a sense of spirituality would encompass all of these other values, giving students a sense of the sacredness and interconnectedness of life and human communities.

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13This does not necessarily imply a religious grounding; see, for example, Weaver and Cottrell (1992).
14See, for example, Warrick 1997.
My interviewees felt that students needed to be prepared to be successful in a fragmented, quickly changing society. Mission counselor Alice Norton wanted students to learn to live within the systems. A lot of kids aren’t successful in the school system. They need to learn how to live with that, use it to their advantage in a positive way without losing their individuality.

Similarly, St. Ignatius Superintendent John Matt declared as his number one priority “to develop programs to have kids ready for life in the next century so they’re productive members of society.” This sense of needing to prepare students to survive in the world was strongest among administrators and parents, at both schools.

Missing in these goals, however, is any sense among members of the school communities that they could have an impact on the state of the world students are being prepared for. Except for the Hellgate student who wanted to design a “future class,” not a single interviewee expressed ideas (at least during our discussion of the things important for students to learn) consistent with critical pedagogy or Daniel Quinn: that students could be empowered to create fundamental change in the way their society is structured. Critical pedagogy asks students to critically examine the social structures they are living in and, through gaining a deeper understanding of those structures, to create meaningful change in them. Daniel Quinn’s work argues that we have the knowledge and ability to find ways of creating sustainable, supportive societies. My interviewees, by contrast, took as a given that the future will be unpredictable, fragmented, socially unstable and difficult for many young adults to succeed in. They took on preparing students to deal with this system, but it did not occur to any of them to train their students to create a world that works for them. Beyond even a sense of resignation, I found among all groups a failure to question whether the future had to be an even more chaotic version of the present. The only partial exception to this was one teacher at Mission and several at Hellgate who specifically taught their students skills – such as drafting legislation, organizing Earth Day events, or debating – that encouraged them to be active
members of American society. Even these teachers, however, did not specifically share with me that they had a goal to teach their students how to transform society.

I found, as I expected, that no teachers at either school explicitly taught EJ; in other words, there was no use of the terms “environmental justice” or “environmental racism.” However, I did find that students, teachers and administrators at Hellgate were able to name several topics, from local to national in scope, that had been taught at Hellgate and would fall under an EJ framework. Hellgate students listed several examples, although the emphasis in these topics was on environment more than social justice: the water quality of the Clark Fork, water week in Geography class, nuclear testing. Most teachers, particularly Leo Bird and ESL teacher Nancy Larum, could name something in their curriculum that would qualify as EJ. For instance, the way Leo Bird teaches cultural issues, respect for the earth, and social values is intertwined with his native Blackfeet language:

The language, when we’re talking about it, inside it is a real meaning. Take one word out, like na ko kii toots tsa po pii. Literally, it means “may I catch a ride with you.” But the story is about an old man walking, he’s really pitiful, lost his whole family. He’s looking around, a guy comes with a horse, and he [the first man] asks, “May I catch a ride with you?” But the story is about losing his family, how that old man felt as he was walking, how the other man felt, how the horse felt. Instead of just the word. There’s such a teaching in there – value, feeling, moral teaching.

Although Leo would not label such a teaching “environmental justice” – and, indeed, this particular example doesn’t deal directly with environmental issues – the values and concepts he is teaching are important in EJ. He is asking students to engage with the old man of the story on a very personal level, to step into his world and feel what he feels. And in his biology classes, he uses the same technique of looking deeply into language (in this case, the Latin names of species) to create a sense of relatedness and respect for the natural world.

Examples of EJ-related topics in St. Ignatius’ curriculum were more difficult to find. Lynn Vanderberg, George Price and the history teacher taught things which would fall under the rubric of social justice, looking critically at how social structures empower
some and disempower others. And science teacher John Ligas had a strong focus on environmental topics in his curriculum. But I found nothing which combined social justice and environmental issues, one criterion for an EJ framework. This was surprising to me, since the school is located on a reservation whose tribal government has dealt with several EJ issues over the past few years. (See Appendix 5.) Upperclass students expressed frustration at the lack of engagement with social issues in their classes. They felt that only their current events class dealt constructively with the “real world” and social concerns, and for the most part, adults “tell us we need to fix the world, but they don’t tell us what’s going on in it.”

I did find that both schools had a commitment to dealing with prejudice in their own school community. Mission teachers made an attempt, sometimes successful, to include Native American perspectives in their curriculum. Native American Studies was offered as a class, and the administration sponsored a “Healing Racism” class for both students and teachers. Many students told me that “we all get along” and friendships between students of different races were commonplace. However, many interviewees expressed to me that they still felt racism – white students against Indian and sometimes vice-versa – was a serious problem at the school and was not being addressed systematically.

Hellgate’s school atmosphere, by contrast, reflected a more systematic attempt to foster respect for diversity at the school. Like Mission, Hellgate offered a Native culture class (Leo Bird’s Blackfeet Language and Culture). Hellgate also had a student organization dedicated to fostering respect for diversity. Although participants’ expressed views on racism at their respective schools were not markedly different between Mission and Hellgate, I sensed more acceptance of diversity at Hellgate.

I found that people at both of the schools I interviewed felt their primary goal was to prepare students for an uncertain and rapidly changing world, and that responsibility included teaching social skills and values as well as academic skills. While these skills and values were compatible with EJ education, interviewees did not express a
commitment to teach students to make a difference in the world, something I feel is important to EJ education. Finally, while neither school was teaching anything that they labeled as “environmental justice,” Hellgate and to a much lesser extent St. Ignatius did have areas of the curriculum which, according to interviewees, had elements of EJ.

**Suggestions: Making an Impact**

I first asked interviewees what goals they felt EJ education should achieve. After sharing goals with me, participants offered many suggestions for a successful EJ program; their suggestions included teaching techniques, recommendations about the appropriate school atmosphere to support EJ, and ideas about how to integrate EJ into the current curriculum. They also expressed concerns about how EJ education would be received in the community and whether it was logistically feasible or would have a real impact.

I began the “suggestions” section of my interviews by asking what interviewees saw as the goals of EJ education. Except in the case of parents at both schools, the goals that people stated fell into four categories: to become aware of the issues, to understand EJ, to respect others or feel empathy with victims of environmental injustice, and to make a difference in the world. These goals, although listed separately here, often ran together in the answers my interviewees gave: they might focus, for instance, on understanding, but imply that that understanding would be used to change something or encourage respect.

Many respondents at both schools saw awareness as a main goal, although almost never the only one. Students at Mission, for example, wanted simply to know that environmental discrimination exists, and Hellgate psychologist Carol Holte felt it was important for students to be “more informed and sensitized” about EJ issues, especially in a culturally homogeneous place such as Montana. These interviewees, many of whom were hearing the term “environmental justice” for the first time themselves, recognized
that an awareness that EJ exists and affects the lives of human beings is a necessary starting point for EJ education.

Those people who mentioned understanding as a goal almost always connected it with a value: “understanding without judgment,” “understand the impact of imposing your will on the land and people,” “understand that there’s diversity everywhere.” Although it was not stated explicitly, the purpose of having students understand EJ seemed to be to encourage a shift in values: more respect, more empathy, more tolerance for diversity. The only exception to this was my first group of Mission students – the ones somewhat resistant to the idea of EJ education – who said only that “more knowledge is always better.”

Respect, empathy, caring for others, and related values were listed by many as important in EJ education. Harry Gadbow arguably expressed this perspective best:

There’s the Sophiclean idea: we don’t know empathy until we ourselves have suffered. Most of us in America don’t have to or want to suffer. It’s important that we suffer vicariously through education, that we don’t shy away from this.

Participants saw that students needed to somehow experience the realities of environmental injustice in order to internalize a sense of empathy, and they wanted to encourage students to see beyond themselves and their immediate needs and wants.

Without exception, my interviewees said that one goal of EJ education was to actually make a difference in the world. In contrast to their responses when I asked about what their current teaching priorities were, respondents saw that effective EJ education included taking action for environmental justice. A few focused on the action itself: having students “fight for a cause” or organize in their community. They did not, however, elaborate on what that action would look like. Others focused on the purpose of action for the students themselves: to “give kids food for thought and a place to put their energy,” for instance, or to “make them more humane.” But the majority who talked about action imagined its result in the world. One Hellgate student hoped that ER “would be pretty close to gone in 10 years,” and a Hellgate teacher envisioned “a caring
change in human consciousness." Another Hellgate teacher imagined more people saying "we need to change the mode of production because nobody wants it," and a Mission parent said that "it'd be like the [19]60's again," with young people inspired to affect change in the world. All of my interviewees, with the possible exception of a couple of students, were engaged in this question — they gave detailed answers which indicated that they saw a more environmentally just future through education as a very real possibility.

I did, however, find that some interviewees expressed resignation about EJ education making a difference in the world. One Mission administrator wondered aloud if it could make a difference in people's behavior, and a Hellgate student reminded me that "this country was founded on racism." Even as they imagined utopian societies with no poverty or racism, participants acknowledged that not all students would be moved to take action against environmental discrimination. Students themselves seemed the most resigned. Several expressed that they felt little hope or confidence that the world would improve; they felt that this country had been founded on racism and would continue to be prejudiced. However, I was surprised that I did not encounter more resignation during the course of my interviews. This could be a result of the people I chose to interview — particularly in the case of teachers and parents, they tended to be those who were predisposed to talk about social and environmental issues. It could also be a result of the questions I chose to ask; because they were fairly broad and because I did not focus on the social implications of ending environmental injustice, my interviewees may not have grasped the extent of the changes needed to make environmental justice a reality.

As I mentioned above, my small sample of parents at each school discussed different goals than other populations did. At Mission, the parents I talked with — two of whom considered themselves strongly spiritual and one of whom was Native American — had a grand view of a future without racism, poverty or environmental degradation. At Hellgate, by contrast, the parents of Native children saw the goal of EJ as creating an
equal opportunity for their own child, free from racism. Where one set of parents had big visions for the world overall, the other was firmly focused on their own families.

From all interviewees, I received copious suggestions about how to implement a successful EJ curriculum. They included ideas about the types of teaching techniques to use, recommendations about the overall approach and school atmosphere that would create a successful program, and specific ideas for integrating EJ into subject-area curricula. A more complete list of these suggestions is included in Appendix 6.

The teaching techniques that interviewees thought would work for EJ education were very similar for all groups at both schools. People felt that EJ education would be successful only under two conditions: students were engaged actively in real-life, local issues, and students were exposed to a variety of perspectives and allowed to form their own assessment about the situation they were studying. The picture that interviewees painted for me involved having students go out into the community and work with an EJ issue such as Yellowstone Pipeline (YPL) or Kerr Dam (see Appendix 5). They might begin by reading newspaper articles and editorials about the issue. They would hear guest speakers or interview people from many perspectives – for instance, in the case of YPL, they would talk with pipeline officials, government officials, the Confederated Salish and Kootenai tribes, and citizens upset with the pipeline. They might actually shadow one of those people for a day. Students could prepare debates on the issue, or study similar battles in other places. During this process, they would be encouraged to make their own assessment of the EJ issue; they would not be told which “side” is right or wrong or how an environmentally just solution should be reached.

A strong theme that emerged, especially at Hellgate, is that teaching appropriate issues and using hands-on techniques to do so is still not enough. Successful EJ education, many interviewees felt, is only possible if the entire school culture supports it. It is not possible to effectively introduce students to the ideas of EJ if teachers or students are racist themselves, or ignore the difficulties faced by people of color in their own
school. Science teacher Jeanne Cox felt that a necessary step to having open discussions about EJ was to create a safe space in the classroom by doing group-building exercises;

Anytime you have something with an emotional aspect, you have to have group-building within the room, so kids are comfortable expressing their opinions. I work on that; I spend first semester building trust in the room. There’s not just one right or wrong answer. We do current events about once a month; it’s kind of a break where we put chairs in a circle, do physical things like that to indicate it’s a different kind of class...Kids are really receptive to that. After a few times, they begin to feel like different opinions are OK. The only way to free them to think is for them to know they can have their own opinion.

Other teachers felt that programs such as Mission’s Healing Racism class and Hellgate’s RESPECT group were essential to creating a school atmosphere that would allow for EJ education to work. As ESL teacher Nancy Larum put it,

Kids need to see changes that impact them. So, for example, when we talk about environmental racism and we’re not treating kids with respect, they see that. If they see us being good models, then they will become good models. But if they see us allowing things to happen that shouldn’t, they’ll remember that.

A school that is not itself an environment with justice, according to my interviewees, cannot effectively teach EJ.

In a similar vein, many interviewees stressed the importance of having teachers be interested in and excited about teaching EJ. Several Hellgate students suggested that EJ be taught by newer teachers who “don’t already have an opinion formed.” Or, from a different angle, a Mission student pointed out that “how [teachers] teach is more important than what.” One Hellgate teacher even suggested a teacher training program which included specific suggestions on how to implement a program.

There was no clear consensus on where EJ education could best be included in the curriculum. Some people felt that it could and should be integrated into all existing subject areas – particularly English, history, and science – while a few suggested an entire course or unit around EJ. Several Hellgate students also mentioned the possibility of an extracurricular program or group devoted to EJ – similar to the S.A.V.E. environmental group or the RESPECT student group. Many teachers, at both schools, envisioned places in their own curricula where they could begin teaching students about
environmental discrimination and environmental justice—things like writing EJ-related bills in government class or reading science fiction in English.

Although my participants were generally excited about the possibility of teaching EJ and willing to offer suggestions, they did raise concerns about the feasibility—both logistical and philosophical—of EJ education. Some of their concerns were logistical: it requires time in the school schedule, money from the district, and a reasonably well-behaved class to travel to Alberton or even White Pine Sash so students can experience a community impacted by ED firsthand. Teachers were concerned that there simply wasn’t room in their curriculum to add more—much less a topic that requires field trips and interviews—without giving up more of their current curriculum than is acceptable.

Another concern was that there would be community resistance to teaching EJ. This was particularly an issue at Mission, where interviewees shared about the tensions between Indians and whites and where teachers had already been reprimanded for grappling with racial issues in class. Mission parent Charles Tellier’s image of the “Spotted Owl Soup” sign at the local restaurant, and Lynn Vanderberg’s experience teaching Winter Kill, were powerful reminders of the resistance that the community might have to schools teaching EJ. The root of this resistance seems to be that the subject matter is profound and if students really engage it, they will very likely begin to look at the world differently. They might change their buying habits, choose to help victims of environmental discrimination, or begin envisioning a world with better relationships between people and each other and people and the land. “No one wants to know,” about environmental injustice, according to Hellgate psychologist Carol Holte. “It makes it harder to buy things” and carry on a business-as-usual existence, and so it is threatening to people. This is an important concern, and one that would need to be addressed for any school considering adopting an EJ curriculum. It could be partly addressed in the school atmosphere itself; if a school had a clear commitment to treating all students equally and honoring diversity, the school community would have less resistance to teaching issues
like EJ which have a racial component. However, resistance is also likely to come from the larger community, including from corporations or other entities that might not be portrayed favorably in an EJ frame.

As mentioned above, many interviewees were concerned about the possibility of indoctrinating students – asking or even telling them to believe a particular way about an issue. Hellgate principal Doug Deason articulated this concern well:

Here’s the critical factor: are you indoctrinating or educating? What you have to be careful with is, is your program indoctrinating? Or does it set up questions that are discovery? Students may not come up with the same answer, but is it legitimate based on the facts?

They emphasized that judgments and assessments about EJ issues needed to come from the students themselves, and that the role of the teacher was to expose students to many perspectives and develop their critical thinking.

Finally, the cynicism mentioned above manifested in the concerns of some interviewees. They felt that teaching about EJ might be a waste of time because things wouldn’t change fundamentally. However, despite this and the abovementioned concerns, I did not interview a single adult, and only two or three students, who did not feel that EJ was worth adding to the curriculum.

Participants saw several related goals of EJ education, the most profound being to make a difference in the world. They suggested many techniques and possible frameworks for successfully teaching EJ, all of which encouraged students to think critically about and develop empathy around real-life issues. Concerns that interviewees expressed ranged from logistical difficulties to widespread resistance to the teaching of EJ.
Recommendations: The Next Journey

As stated earlier, the main purpose of my research is to learn how to effectively teach EJ in public high schools by listening to the voices of those who would be involved in its teaching. I wanted to step into their world temporarily so that I could understand what would and wouldn't work in an EJ curriculum. Based on what I found, I can make several related recommendations about the next steps in implementing EJ education.

EJ education needs to be education for environmental justice, not just about environmental justice. An effective EJ program, according to the goals listed by my interviewees, encourages respect, empathy and social action on the part of students, in addition to awareness or knowledge about EJ issues. In essence, it will lead to more environmental justice in the world. Simply giving students information about issues is not sufficient to cause this shift. This was made clear to me during my interview with the first group of Mission students: although I gave them information about what EJ is and some examples of EJ issues, they did not express a desire to create an environmentally just world. In fact, many were defensive and didn't want to envision or discuss the future of EJ education. Therefore, an EJ program that meets the goals of my interviewees must have an explicit goal of creating environmental justice in the world and must be structured to do so.

Although participants wanted students to have more empathy for others and to take action to improve the world, they did not explicitly offer a process for causing this shift. Based on my observations at the schools, it seems that a starting point would be to address the cynicism that is pervasive among students and adults. Many teachers, administrators and faculty talked at length about the complex and difficult world they felt students would be entering, and students themselves expressed that they didn't feel well-equipped to make a difference in the world; they wondered if it was even possible to make a difference. People who feel at the mercy of circumstances are unlikely to want to learn about environmental injustice or feel motivated to take action based on what they
learn. They will be unwilling or even unable to envision a different kind of world, much less begin to create it.

Critical pedagogy is essential to addressing this cynicism and moving beyond it to envision more just social systems. CP challenges students to look critically at their world. It asks deep questions of students: What is inconsistent, unfair, or unjust in the world? How does it affect your life and the lives of others? What social structures support it? What kind of a world would you envision, and what now isn’t consistent with that? What concrete steps could be taken in your own community — or another community being looked at from an EJ lens — that would begin to alter things? Critical pedagogy sees students as cause rather than effect in the world and can profoundly alter their feelings of empowerment. It does so while avoiding one of the major pitfalls mentioned as a concern by interviewees: because it asks the students themselves to generate study questions and make judgments on situations, schools could not be accused of indoctrinating students or asking them to believe certain points of view.

Daniel Quinn’s ideas and those of Deep and Social Ecology are also important in setting the tone for effective and emancipatory EJ education in schools. Students need to understand that the model of society that they are familiar with is not the only possibility, as Quinn points out. Most of my interviewees had difficulty imagining systems that were very different from existing ones — even when I asked students to imagine very different ways of teaching for EJ, like abandoning the school building altogether, most gave me ideas that were conservative by contrast: invite guest speakers, do interviews. Quinn’s critique of “Taker” cultures allows students to examine society from very different perspectives than they might otherwise.

Combining Quinn’s assessment of “Taker” culture as living outside the laws of nature with Deep Ecology principles that humans are simply an average member of the biosphere also allows students to critically examine the changes that would be needed to live sustainably, as well as justly. Particularly key are Quinn’s ideas that humans are not
inherently bad or wrong – rather, there are things about the way our culture is operating that simply don’t work in the long term.

The preceding ideas are not, of course, a specific process to follow with students. Developing a curriculum which includes these ideas is outside the scope of this paper. They represent, rather, a set of ideas and principles which have been extremely effective in other settings in creating the kind of outcomes envisioned by many of my interviewees.

In addition to using the discourse of critical pedagogy and related ideas in classroom study of and education for EJ, schools need to address equity and justice in their own environments. Members of both the St. Ignatius and Hellgate communities expressed that they saw discrimination in their school, from students of color being teased by classmates, to unfair treatment by teachers, to biases in the curricula. The administration, faculty and student body of the schools is primarily white (although St. Ignatius' student population is almost half Native), and this causes both recognized and unintentional or unrecognized bias in the school. Parents, in particular, seemed sensitized to the bias their children faced, and several of the students I spoke with admitted that either they or classmates they knew of had faced discrimination.

Emancipatory education for environmental justice requires that students experience justice on a visceral level, both so that they feel safe in expressing their ideas and so that they have some belief that EJ is possible. This means that schools which wish to have a commitment to EJ education must take action to assure that students of all backgrounds are respected, honored, and taught appropriately. For instance, Native American parents that I interviewed felt that their children faced discrimination and were not supported in combating it by the faculty or staff. Under those conditions, parents told me, their children did not have the space to think about wider issues of environmental justice. They first needed to be taught how to handle injustice against them personally.
Although it was less evident than issues of direct racism in the conversations I had, I feel that teaching methods and subjects appropriate to students of different backgrounds are also integral to EJ education. The techniques of critical pedagogy can lead to profound changes in student motivation and thought, but students also need to have a curriculum that speaks to their cultural background. This was mentioned by several Indian parents and administrators with regard to the history curriculum, which they felt needed to better reflect the history of the Native peoples of North America. Native American students also approach education differently; they are often less competitive than other students and more interested in helping others (Gilliland 1995). These are brief examples of what is a potentially very important issue in EJ education: being culturally appropriate to students of many different backgrounds.

In conjunction with this, I recommend that teacher trainings be an integral part of EJ education. Many interviewees expressed to me that the attitude and understanding of teachers could be the difference between successful and unsuccessful EJ education. According to my respondents, a teacher who feels that he is forced to teach EJ, or, conversely, one who is so set on fixing environmental injustice that she does not allow her students to think for themselves, will not be able to teach effectively for EJ. Nor will someone who is interested in EJ but has no background understanding of it. Offering trainings or workshops which ground teachers in a basic understanding of EJ and use many of the same foundations as an EJ curriculum would – critical pedagogy and Daniel Quinn’s ideas, for example – will get teachers interested and engaged in EJ so that they can begin effectively integrating it into their curriculum.

According to the suggestions offered by participants, another important piece of successful EJ education is contact between the school and community. Many people expressed the importance of allowing students to spend time in the community, gathering information and making observations about what’s going on in “the real world.” If students are to have the ability to see deeply into their community, schools need to have a
positive relationship with the wider community. This is something that Tim Skinner, the principal of St. Ignatius, felt was missing—many parents, for instance, were antagonistic toward the school because of their own childhood experiences. Establishing this relationship will also address the concern many had that community members would be resistant to or threatened by teaching about EJ. If they were directly involved in planning and executing projects, they would most likely be less resistant.

Because many of the goals, suggestions, and concerns given by participants were similar to those encountered in environmental education, it would be helpful for those who are committed to educating for environmental justice to examine the history, successes, and failures of EE. Like EJ education, EE attempts to bring a particular set of values and knowledge into the existing public school curriculum, and has done so on a systematic level over the past 25 years. For EJ education to be successful, those committed to it need to understand how to—and how not to—begin inserting it into the discourse of public school teaching, and the history of EE provides insight into this.

Finally, one factor that was not explicitly mentioned by many interviewees, but which I feel is important to consider, is the resistance to EJ education that may arise in the corporate world. Several people recognized that successful EJ education would challenge the status quo, but no one gave me detailed examples of the effects this might have. Based on other experiences in environmental education, it is reasonable to assume that many corporations, especially those engaged in activities that could be considered environmentally unjust, would have strong negative reactions to the teaching of EJ. Speculating on a detailed response to this is outside the scope of this paper. But it is an important consideration when planning EJ curriculum.

Summary: The Long and Winding Journey

This thesis has been, by turns, a burden, a gift, and an incredible learning experience. I feel grateful to have been given the chance to experience the communities of Hellgate
High School and St. Ignatius High School, and to begin to understand how they might integrate the study of EJ into their existing curriculum. I felt absolutely welcomed in both communities, and therefore felt able to delve deeply into issues of EJ education with my participants.

I found distinct differences between the two schools in their understanding of, approach to, and receptiveness towards EJ education. Although Hellgate’s administration was initially somewhat more wary of my research than Mission’s, I found an excitement about discussing EJ issues at Hellgate that was less pronounced at Mission; on the other hand, at Mission I was able to see how EJ issues related to people personally. At both schools I discovered an openness toward teaching about and for EJ, although actual examples of EJ in the curriculum were few and far between. Particularly encouraging was the willingness of interviewees to have students learn values as part of their public school education; this foundation makes it much more likely that EJ education could be successful. Finally, combining the goals, suggestions and concerns of interviewees at each school with my own experience in education and environmental justice points to several directions for the future of successful EJ education. These include the use of critical pedagogy and related ideas as a foundation, hands-on community work as part of a study of EJ, the importance of a supportive school atmosphere for students of all races, teacher trainings for EJ teachers, and the need to proactively address possible resistance in the larger community.
REFERENCES


Weaver, Richard L. and Howard W. Cotrell. 1992. “A non-religious spirituality that causes students to clarify their values and respond with passion.” Education Vol. 112, No. 3.

APPENDIX 1: STUDY QUESTIONS

KEY:
1 - UNDERSTANDING
2 - APPLICATION
3 - SUGGESTIONS
Questions for Students

2. What are your favorite things to learn about in school? Least favorite?

2. What do you think are the most important things you should be learning about? Why?

2. Do you think what you learn in school relates to the “real world?” If so, how? Do you have any specific examples?

2. Can you name any social justice or environmental issues in your community? What do you know about them? Where did you learn it?

2. What kinds of social and environmental issues have you studied in school?

2. Do you think that social and/or environmental issues are important for you to learn about? Why or why not?

1. Have you ever heard of ER/EJ? What does it mean to you?

(share definitions of ER/EJ)

1. Do you understand these definitions of ER and EJ? Is there anything that isn’t clear?

1. Do you agree with these definitions? What would you change?

1. Do you think that environmental injustice exists globally? Nationally? What about in your own community?

1. Can you think of anything happening in your community that might be an environmental justice issue? Do you think that you’ve ever been a victim of environmental injustice? Do you think you’ve ever caused environmental injustice? If so, tell me about it.

2. Do you think that you’ve learned about environmental justice in school? If so, tell me about it. If not, why do you think you haven’t?

2. Do you think that it’s important to learn about ER/EJ in school? Why or why not?

3. What reasons could you think of for not learning about ER/EJ? These could be reasons that you think it shouldn’t be taught, or reasons why someone else might not want it taught.

3. What reasons could you think of for learning about ER/EJ? Why might it be important?

3. If you and/or your teacher wanted to study environmental justice in school, what kind of things would you want to learn about? Global, national, or local? What kinds of projects, etc. would you want to do? Get creative!

3. How would you want to learn about EJ? Think about the way you’d want to be organized, whether you’d be in a classroom or somewhere else, how the teacher would approach it, etc.

Appendix 1
3. What would you see as the goal of EJ education?

3. How do you think things would change if ER/EJ was made a bigger part of your education? How might the world be different in 20 years?
QUESTIONS FOR TEACHERS

2. What do you think are the most important things for kids to learn?

2. Compared to other subjects your students learn, how important do you think it is for them to learn about environmental issues? What about issues of social justice?

1. Have you ever heard of environmental racism? Environmental justice? What do you think they mean?

1. What is your first reaction, as a teacher, to the concepts of ER and EJ?

share definitions of ER/EJ

1. Do you agree with these definitions of ER and EJ? What needs clarification, or what do you not agree with?

1. Do you feel that ER and EJ are real issues in the world? In the U.S.? What about locally?

1. Can you name any specific ER/EJ examples globally/nationally?

1. Do you feel that your geographic area has examples of environmental discrimination? If so, what are they? Who do you think is being disproportionately affected, and why?

2. Do you see anywhere that local, national or global ER/EJ already applies in your curriculum/classroom?

3. What would you see as the goal of EJ education?

3. What do you think could happen, good or bad, if EJ were expanded or made part of the curriculum?

3. What reasons might you have for not being interested in bringing EJ to your classroom or expanding it?

3. What reasons might you have for wanting to continue or begin teaching EJ?

3. What would need to happen or change in your classroom, in the school, or in the community for you to be able to successfully teach EJ?

3. What possibilities can you envision if you were to successfully begin or expand teaching EJ?

3. What specific projects do you think are or would be appropriate for EJ education?

3. What teaching styles, formats, classroom setups, approaches, etc. do you think could foster EJ education? (Think as small or as radically big as you want!)

3. What do you think might change, good or bad, if ER/EJ were made an important part of education? How might the world be different in 20 years?

Appendix 1
Questions for Administrators

1. What are your priorities for this school? What are you trying to accomplish as an administrator?

2. What do you think it’s most important for the students here to learn?

2. Compared to other subjects, how would you rank the importance of learning about environmental issues? Social justice issues?

1. Are you familiar with the term ER/EJ? What does it mean to you?

(share definitions of ER/EJ)

1. Is there anything in this definition that isn’t clear or that you would change?

1. Do you believe that ER exists internationally? Nationally? Locally?

1. Can you give examples of any environmental justice issues in this community, or regionally or nationally?

2. Do you feel that your teachers already address ER/EJ in their curriculum? If so, in what classes and contexts?

3. What is your response to the idea of expanding or introducing environmental justice in this school’s curriculum?

3. Where do you think ER/EJ most appropriately fit in your school’s curriculum?

3. What do you think would be the best approach to teaching EJ in this community, in terms of class time, class organization, teaching methods, etc?

3. What concerns would you have about teaching ER/EJ?

3. What would you see as the goal of EJ education?

3. How might the world look different in 20 years if EJ were taught systematically?
QUESTIONS FOR PARENTS

2. What do you think are the most important things your child should learn about in school? Why?

2. Compared to other subjects, how would you rank the importance of learning about environmental issues? Social justice issues?

1. Have you ever heard the term ER/EJ? What do you think they mean? Do you think they apply at all to your or your children's lives?

(share definitions of ER/EJ)

1. Are you aware of any environmental justice issues internationally? Nationally? In your community? Do you believe that ER exists?

2. Do you think that your children already learn about ER/EJ issues? Please give me examples. Do you agree with what and how they're learning?

3. Do you think it's appropriate for your kids to learn about EJ? Why or why not?

3. What suggestions would you have for how your children could best learn about EJ? Specifically, what type of information would you want them to learn?

3. How do you think your children could best learn about ER/EJ? What teaching styles, classroom organization, projects, or other approaches would be appropriate?

3. What do you think might change, good or bad, if your child and his/her classmates learned about environmental justice? How might the world look different in 20 years?

3. What concerns do you have, if any, about this type of education?

3. What do you see as the ultimate goal of EJ education?

Appendix 1
APPENDIX 2: DEFINITION SHEETS
Environmental Racism/Classism:
a form of discrimination in which institutions (like businesses and
governments) make decisions or have rules, regulations, or policies
which cause some groups of people to live with more
environmental problems than others
*For example* - One report* showed that people of color were much
more likely to have a toxic waste dump near their neighborhood.
*Another example* - Almost all the uranium (which is radioactive and
dangerous) mined in the U.S. comes from Indian reservations.*

Environmental Justice:
(1) "... those cultural norms and values, rules, regulations,
behaviors, policies and decisions to support sustainable
communities." In other words, environmental justice embraces the
idea that all people, regardless of race or class (or other factors)
should have a place to live that they consider safe, healthy, and
environmentally sound and that society needs to be set up to
support this. Good schools, adequate housing, well-paying jobs,
etc. are seen as part of this, in addition to a clean environment.
(2) The general name for the social movement that is addressing
environmental racism/classism
*For example* - In Roxbury, Massachusetts (a part of Boston), mostly
black residents organized to rebuild several blocks of their town, got a
subway station put in the neighborhood, and planted trees.*

All definitions are taken from:
Bryant, Bunyan. 1995. "Introduction." in Environmental Justice: Issues,

United States, A National Report on the Racial and Socio-Economic Characteristics of
Communities with Hazardous Waste Sites.
† LaDuke, Winona. 1993. "A Society Based on Conquest Cannot be Sustained: Native Peoples
and the Environmental Crisis." in Hofrichter, Richard. Toxic Struggles: The Theory and
* Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative, "Holding Ground" (videotape)
**Environmental Racism:**
"an extension of racism" in which institutions (like businesses and governments) make decisions or have rules, regulations, or policies which cause people of color to be exposed to more environmental hazards than "white" people

**For example** - One report* showed that people of color were much more likely to have a toxic waste dump near their neighborhood.

**Another example** - Almost all the uranium (which is radioactive and dangerous) mined in the U.S. comes from Indian reservations.†

**Environmental Justice:**
"... those cultural norms and values, rules, regulations, behaviors, policies and decisions to support sustainable communities." In other words, environmental justice embraces the idea that all people, regardless of race or class (or other factors) should have a place to live that they consider safe, healthy, and environmentally sound and that society needs to be set up to support this. Good schools, adequate housing, well-paying jobs, etc. are seen as part of this, in addition to a clean environment.

**For example** - In Roxbury, Massachusetts (a part of Boston), mostly black residents organized to rebuild several blocks of their town, got a subway station put in the neighborhood, and planted trees.*

All definitions are taken from:


* Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative, "Holding Ground" (videotape)
APPENDIX 3: CONSENT FORMS
For my graduate degree in Environmental Studies, I am doing research on teaching
environmental justice in public schools. Environmental justice combines social and
environmental issues — it looks at the social side of environmental problems. It especially
considers whether certain races or classes have more exposure to environmental
problems.

I want to know what you as a public high school student think about environmental
justice and how it might fit into your education. To find out, I would like to interview
you in at least one of the following two situations:

1) you would be part of a group of around 10 students, and I would ask questions of the
whole group and let you discuss them
2) a personal interview, where I work with you alone and ask you specific questions

I will ask questions about your classes and about environmental justice as a concept.
Examples of the type of questions I might ask are:

• What kinds of social and environmental issues have you studied in school?
• Have you ever heard of environmental justice? What does it mean to you?
• Can you think of anything happening in your community that might be an
environmental justice issue?
• If you wanted to study more environmental justice, what kinds of topics or projects
might interest you? What do you think are good formats to learn about this kind of
issue?

I will take notes from the interviews but I won’t tape-record you. I will not use your
name when I write up my findings. People who read my paper will have no way of
identifying you personally.

If at any time you no longer want to participate, you can withdraw simply by telling me.
It will not affect your grade in any way.

If you agree to be interviewed, please sign your name below. Your parent/guardian also
needs to sign the parent consent form.

I agree to be interviewed for Kira Sherwood’s research project on environmental justice
in public schools.

Name ___________________________ Date __________

Appendix 3
KIRA SHERWOOD: MASTER’S THESIS
PARENT CONSENT FORM

For my Master’s thesis in Environmental Studies at the University of Montana, I am researching the application of environmental justice in public school education. Environmental justice is the idea that people of all races and classes should have a safe and clean environment. It addresses the allegation that people of color and lower-income people are unfairly exposed to environmental hazards.

My research has three purposes. The first is to characterize understanding of environmental justice: what do people think of when they hear the term, and what do they know about it? The second is to see whether and how environmental justice is currently applied in the curriculum. The third is to solicit suggestions on whether and how to include environmental justice in the curriculum. My research will be shared with the administration of your school.

As part of my research, I wish to interview your child. I will ask general questions relating to the three purposes above. Some examples of possible questions are:

- What kinds of social and environmental issues have you studied in school?
- Have you ever heard of environmental justice? What does it mean to you?
- Can you think of anything happening in your community that might be an environmental justice issue?
- If you wanted to study more environmental justice, what kinds of topics or projects might interest you? What do you think are good formats to learn about this kind of issue?

The interview will be in one of two settings:
1) as part of a focus group of around 10 students, where I ask questions of the group
2) in a one-on-one interview

Interviews will take place on school property between February 1 and April 30, 1998, either during the day or immediately after school. The interviews will not be taped and your child will not be identified by name or other unique characteristics in my report.

There are no foreseen risks to your child associated with this research. However, the University of Montana requires that the following paragraph be included:

“In the event that your child is injured as a result of this research he/she should individually seek appropriate medical treatment. If the injury is caused by the negligence of the University of any of its employees, you may be entitled to reimbursement or compensation pursuant to the Comprehensive State Insurance Plan established by the Department of Administration under the authority of M.C.A., Title 2, Chapter 9. In the event of a claim for such injury, further information may be obtained from the University’s Claims Representative or University Legal Counsel.”

If you have any questions, you can contact me, Kira Sherwood, at 542-3641. You can also contact my thesis advisor, Fletcher Brown, at 243-5287. You and/or your child are free to withdraw your consent at any time during the research process, simply by informing me. Participation, nonparticipation or withdrawal of consent will in no way affect your child’s status or grades in school.

Thank you so much for your support of this research.

I give permission for my child to be interviewed (check all that apply)

_____ in a focus group
_____ individually

as part of Kira Sherwood’s Master’s research in environmental justice.

Parent/Guardian Name_________________________________

Child’s Name_________________________________________ Date________

Appendix 3
KIRA SHERWOOD  
MASTER'S THESIS  
CONSENT FORM

For my Master's thesis in Environmental Studies at the University of Montana, I am researching the application of environmental justice in public school education. Environmental justice is the idea that people of all races and classes should have a safe and clean environment. It addresses the allegation that people of color and lower-income people are unfairly exposed to environmental hazards.

My research has three purposes. The first is to characterize understanding of environmental justice: what do people think of when they hear the term, and what do they know about it? The second is to see whether and how environmental justice is currently applied in the curriculum. The third is to solicit suggestions on whether and how to include environmental justice in the curriculum. My research will be shared with the administration of your school.

As part of my research, I would like to interview you regarding the above topics. The interviews will either be one-on-one or in small focus groups (5-10 people), conducted on school property unless we arrange otherwise. The interviews will not be taped. I would like to include your name or other identifying characteristics in my final report. You will have the opportunity to see a draft of your words and provide feedback as to whether you are accurately represented. You are free to discontinue permission or participation at any time. If you agree to have your name used, please sign below.

Although there are no foreseen risks to you associated with this research, the University requires that the following paragraph be included.

"In the event that you are injured as a result of this research you should individually seek appropriate medical treatment. If the injury is caused by the negligence of the University or any of its employees, you may be entitled to reimbursement or compensation pursuant to the Comprehensive State Insurance Plan established by the Department of Administration under the authority of M.C.A., Title 2, Chapter 9. In the event of a claim for such injury, further information may be obtained from the University's Claims Representative or University Legal Counsel."

If you have any further questions about my research, you can reach me, Kira Sherwood, at 542-3641 or kira@selway.umt.edu. You can also contact my advisor, Fletcher Brown, at 243-5287 or brownf@selway.umt.edu.

Thank you very much.

________________________________________________________

I hereby give permission for my name or other identifying characteristics to be used in Kira Sherwood's Master's thesis on environmental justice.

Name_________________________ Date__________

Position (as you wish it to appear)__________________________

Appendix 3
APPENDIX 4: PRINCIPLES OF ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE
PRINCIPLES OF ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

WE, THE PEOPLE OF COLOR, gathered together at this multinational People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit to begin to build a national and international movement of all peoples of color to fight the destruction and taking of our lands and communities, do hereby re-establish our spiritual interdependence to the sacredness of our Mother Earth; to respect and celebrate each of our cultures, languages and beliefs about the natural world and our roles in healing ourselves; to insure environmental justice; to promote economic alternatives which would contribute to the development of environmentally safe livelihoods; and, to secure our political, economic and cultural liberation that has been denied for over 500 years of colonization and oppression, resulting in the poisoning of our communities and land and the genocide of our peoples, do affirm and adopt these Principles of Environmental Justice:

1. **Environmental justice** affirms the sacredness of Mother Earth, ecological unity and the interdependence of all species, and the right to be free from ecological destruction.

2. **Environmental justice** demands that public policy be based on mutual respect and justice for all peoples, free from any form of discrimination or bias.

3. **Environmental justice** mandates the right to ethical, balanced and responsible uses of land and renewable resources in the interest of a sustainable planet for humans and other living things.

4. **Environmental justice** calls for universal protection from nuclear testing, extraction, production and disposal of toxic/hazardous wastes and poisons and nuclear testing that threaten the fundamental right to clean air, land, water, and food.

5. **Environmental justice** affirms the fundamental right to political, economic, cultural, and environmental self-determination of all peoples.

6. **Environmental justice** demands the cessation of the production of all toxins, hazardous wastes, and radioactive materials, and that all past and current producers be held strictly accountable to the people for detoxification and containment at the point of production.

7. **Environmental justice** demands the right to participate as equal partners at every level of decision making including needs assessment, planning, implementation, enforcement and evaluation.

8. **Environmental justice** affirms the right of all workers to a safe and healthy work environment, without being forced to choose between an unsafe livelihood and unemployment. It also affirms the right of those who work at home to be free from environmental hazards.

9. **Environmental justice** protects the right of victims of environmental injustice to receive full compensation and reparations for damages as well as quality health care.


11. **Environmental justice** must recognize a special legal and natural relationship of Native Peoples to the U.S. government through treaties, agreements, compacts, and covenants affirming sovereignty and self-determination.

12. **Environmental justice** affirms the need for urban and rural ecological policies to clean up and rebuild our cities and rural areas in balance with nature, honoring the cultural integrity of all of our communities, and providing fair access for all to the full range of resources.

13. **Environmental justice** calls for the strict enforcement of principles of informed consent, and a halt to the testing of experimental reproductive and medical procedures and vaccinations on people of color.

14. **Environmental justice** opposes the destructive operations of multinational corporations.

15. **Environmental justice** opposes military occupation, repression and exploitation of lands, peoples and cultures, and other life forms.

16. **Environmental justice** calls for the education of present and future generations which emphasizes social and environmental issues, based on our experience and an appreciation of our diverse cultural perspectives.

17. **Environmental justice** requires that we, as individuals, make personal and consumer choices to consume as little of Mother Earth's resources and to produce as little waste as possible; and make the conscious decision to challenge and re-prioritize our lifestyles to insure the health of the natural world for present and future generations.

APPENDIX 5:
BRIEF SUMMARIES OF LOCAL EJ ISSUES
Highway 93

The Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) plans to expand Highway 93, which runs north-south through the Flathead Reservation, into a four- and five-lane undivided highway. Reasons given are that traffic on the road is increasing and motorists need to be able to travel faster than they can on a two-lane road without the danger of passing on the opposite side.

However, tribal authorities oppose the road expansion. Participants in a conference last spring on development on the reservation called the road a “recipe for disaster for people who live in the communities along 93, for small businesses, for the environment, for wildlife, and even for the safety of the traveling public.” Opponents contend that the unrestricted wider road will cause more accidents, split small towns, and convert farmland to residential and commercial land. In fact, the entire Flathead Reservation was placed on the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s “America’s 11 Most Endangered Places” due to the Highway 93 expansion plans.

Because the tribes have sovereign power over Indian land, MDT cannot take land for the highway through the power of eminent domain as it would otherwise. Until an agreement is reached between the agency and the tribes, the Federal Highway Administration is withholding funds for the improvement project.

Kerr Dam

Kerr Dam is a 240-foot high hydroelectric facility at the base of Flathead Lake on the Flathead Reservation. It was built at the turn of the century to provide power for western Montana, and the tribes were offered a lease payment and food in exchange for allowing the dam to be built. In 1950, the tribes sued to increase the lease payment, which now stands at $13 million per year.

Kerr is slated to be turned over to tribal management in 2025, although there has been talk in the past of allowing the tribes to purchase it sooner. In the meantime, there has been
been periodic controversy between the tribes and Montana Power Company over management of the dam, particularly over environmental concerns such as water levels and fish spawning.

**Tribal Sovereignty**

In March of 1998, Montana Senator Conrad Burns introduced a bill to the state legislature proposing to limit Indian jurisdiction over non-Indians on a reservation. His bill included non-Indians who resided inside of reservation boundaries, as well as any non-Native person traveling through the reservation.

Burns' bill came after a state Supreme Court ruling that a trial of non-Indians on the Blackfeet reservation had been unfair. His reasoning was that it was impossible to get a fair jury in reservation courts because of small populations, no provisions for change of venue, and the fact that only tribal members could serve on juries. Burns felt it was unfair that non-Indians needed to abide by tribal law but could not vote in tribal elections. On the Flathead reservation, 80% of residents are not tribal members.

Over 700 Native people attended a hearing on the bill in Kalispell, MT to voice their opposition. They were concerned about losing the ability to make decisions about their homeland, and were upset that Senator Burns did not consult with tribal leaders before drafting his bill. Earl Old Person, the leader of the Blackfeet tribe, was quoted as saying “We didn’t ask anyone to come to our homelands. If they decide to come, they should be able to abide by our laws.” Most non-Native reservation residents arrived around the turn of the century, when the US. government failed to honor treaties and allowed non-Indians to settle on reservation land.

**Water Rights**

The past several years have seen disputes over water quality standards and water rights on the Flathead Reservation. Tribal government has the authority to set water

Appendix 5
quality standards on the reservation, including those that are stricter than state levels. This has led to several disagreements.

In 1996, the state Supreme Court ruled that the state of Montana had acted illegally in issuing water permits to non-Indian residents on the Flathead before tribal water rights were determined. According to law, new permits could not be granted if they affected tribal water rights or interfered with tribal use of water.

During debates over sovereignty, non-Indians on or near the reservation were concerned that tribal authority over water quality on the Flathead could cost upstream municipalities a lot of money to meet higher water standards on the reservation. The tribe, by contrast, was concerned that water quality on the reservation would be diminished if they lost the authority to set standards.

Several interviewees mentioned an issue which had not been covered in local papers—the difference in municipal water systems in the St. Ignatius area. One system costs residents $19 per year, while another costs $25 per month, according to John Matt. He and others were concerned about the difference in quality between the two systems and whether there was a correlation between race or income and both the cost and quality of the systems.

Yellowstone Pipeline

The Yellowstone Pipeline is a gasoline pipeline that extends from Billings, MT to Moses Lake, WA. Approximately 56 miles of the pipeline used to extend across the Flathead Reservation. It was governed by a special-use permit which came up for renewal every 20 years, and the tribes had the authority to deny permit renewal. In 1994, when the permit was to be renewed, the tribes after extensive negotiation asked that the pipeline be moved off the reservation.

Tribal leaders cited environmental damage to the reservation which were not well mitigated. Seven spills had occurred on the reservation between 1986 and 1993,
including three on ground sacred to the tribes, and they were not detected in a timely manner.

The pipeline company responded by applying to reconnect the pipeline through the mountainous Ninemile area. In the interim, they removed gasoline from the pipeline in Missoula and transported it by truck or rail to the western boundary of the reservation, where they reinserted it in the pipeline. Trucks generally took the shorter but less safe reservation route across Highway 200, as opposed to Interstate 90. Many tribal members felt that this was done deliberately to spite the tribes; the company holds that it was the most efficient way to transport their products.


Stromnes, John. “Reservation rules: Some praise, some pan Sen. Burns’ bid to end tribal authority over non-Indians on the state’s reservations.” Missoulian


Appendix 5
APPENDIX 6:
SPECIFIC SUGGESTIONS FOR EJ EDUCATION
Specific Suggestions for EJ Education

• Make sure the school environment is just
  – Model an environmentally just society in the school
  – Treat all students with respect
  – Do group-building exercises in the classroom
  – Respect a wide range of opinions
  – Allow students to speak and debate
  – Empower students to make a difference, find their vision

• Do hands-on learning that involves students in their community
  – talk about real-life issues
  – interview local community members or relatives
  – read local newspapers
  – hear guest speakers
  – visit places where EJ is an issue

• Effective teaching is important
  – Need teachers that are genuinely interested in the issue, but won't impose their opinion on students
  – Do teacher trainings so teachers understand EJ
  – Passion and knowledge are both important

• Integration into curriculum?
  – Some saw integration into the Social Science, English, Science or History curricula
  – Others thought EJ could be a separate course or unit
  – Some envisioned a club or after-school program