

“It’s All About Well-being, eh?”
Mindfulness of what we’re making in our Ph.D. Ecologies
by
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Abstract

This transdisciplinary, relational and interactive dissertation focuses on the co-enactment of well-being through our everyday choices and communication patterns. Though the ideas and practices are applicable to any context, this dissertation is specifically focused on what I refer to as our “Ph.D. Ecologies.” I use this term to foreground that academic communities are complex, richly textured and relational. As such, what happens in them has impacts on numerous relationships (seen, unseen, imagined, unimagined) in the larger ecologies of which we are a part.

This dissertation is grounded in 3 overarching questions: *what are we making in our Ph.D. Ecologies, how we are making it and how can we co-enact well-being in the world in and through our Ph.D. Ecologies.* It is a praxis-based case study for exploring new meanings and relational processes or practices as a way of making something different in our Ph.D. Ecologies — something which may contribute to well-being with increased frequency. I invite people with orientations and perspectives that are often separated by time, cultures, disciplines and social contexts into emergent, asynchronous conversations and practice space. Drawing on the logical forces of art based practices and traditional scholarly grammar, helps create the space for these transformational conversations to occur. These are conversations grounded in communication patterns which invite openness, curiosity, relational generativity and genuine inquiry over communication patterns of defence, debate and notions of bounded beings.

This dissertation brings together heuristics from CMM (The Coordinated Management of Meaning), social/relational constructionist and action research-based orientations, and Buddhist and Āyurvedic informed practices as frames for inquiring into and practicing with mindfulness of what we are making and how — including discernment of bifurcating choice points. My goal with this dissertation is not to present a set of results or arrive at a set decision or bounded recommendation. Rather, I am interested in learning about and practicing with transforming patterns of communication as a way of evolving our ecologies so we increase the likelihood of acting together with increased phronesis and increased co-enactment of well-being.

There are many ways to describe this dissertation (many interpretive frames) depending, in part, on where you position yourself in relationship to it. Given its relational orientation and construction as a multi-turned, participatory and flexibly punctuated dialogue, rather than an expert led summary, I am including in this abstract examples of how other participants are describing it — creating an invitation to enter into this dialogue with more than just my perspective on what to expect.

Catherine Creede, Ph.D. described it in this way:

Capturing the complexities of interactive, co-creative dialogue on the page is a challenge to everyone who tries to observe and describe socially constructive communication. Erin's dissertation pushes at the edge of innovation in weaving together multiple stories and perspectives while holding the ground of her authorial voice, and invites us in both content and form to continually consider and reconsider what we are making together, how we are making it and the implications of our choices and turns. In that dynamic, we hold a core question: how do we ensure that what we make in our institutional relationships holds our human wellbeing at the centre?

Barclay Hudson, Ed.D. used this language to describe it:

The dissertation itself is the test case for the theory — the idea of co-enactment, or creation in relationship. Relationships that span history and cultures and academic disciplines. That draw on images as well as words,

performance arts as well as intellectual scholarship. That draw on evolving action research as well as initially formulated goals and hypotheses. On critical self-examination as well as apriori assumptions. On dialogic co-creation as well as deep academic expertise... On ethical premises as well as functional goals...In short, the dissertation is not just an exploration of multiple epistemologies, but a process of evolution through a set of specific dialectical queries. The dialectic is not a Hegelian or Marxist synthesis (thesis, anti-thesis, synthesis), or a struggle between confrontational opposites, or an attempt to find a balance through compromise, or a way to model the pendulum swings of historical acceptance among competing priorities (see Attachment below, on "dialectics"). Rather, the purpose is to create a space for fruitful encounters among different mindsets and perspectives, that are usually separated by confinement within particular disciplines and social contexts...This involves a form of Satyagraha, in the sense coined by Mohandas Gandhi, as "soul force" or "love force" or "truth force"...Satyagraha involves a "double conversion" — a transformation of the truth-teller as much as the audience. In fact, the teller of truth has the more difficult conversion to experience — having to see the other person no longer as opponent but a human and a partner.

Kimberly Pearce, M.A. described it like this:

In the spirit of scholarship *and* art, this dissertation cannot be easily described. It is a kaleidoscope of meta-perspectives, theory, voices, and stories that weave together to form an utterly new way of constructing a dissertation. This is entirely appropriate, given Kreeger's topic of Ph.D. Ecologies. Her use of Western and Eastern approaches to epistemology become the framework for deconstructing how Ph.D. Ecologies get (re)made, the effects these ecologies have on the formation of scholars and what counts as scholarship, and the unintended consequences for people, institutions and scholarly work. Among other things, the brilliance of this dissertation is Kreeger's demonstration of how one might study *any* ecology through a more holistic lens.

Though an Abstract often focuses on results, I hope these descriptions have conveyed a genuine invitation to read and participate in the ongoing conversations and transformations that are co-enacted in this dissertation.

Keywords: Well-being; Mindfulness; Communication; Coordinated Management of Meaning (CMM); Social Construction; Relational Construction; Action Research; Relational Responsibility; Relational Generativity; Complexity; Change; Evolution; Ph.D. Ecologies; Dialogue; Practice-led; Epistemology; Research Methods; Dissertations; Health; Large-scale change; Organizational Development; Buddhism; Āyurveda; Co-enactment; Performative; Academia; Relationship