A PRACTICE APPROACH TO ATTACHMENT AND AUTONOMY
IN SITE BASED EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
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by
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FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

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Glenn Stuart Runnalls, candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education, has presented a thesis titled, *A practice approach to attachment and autonomy in site based educational development*, in an oral examination held on April 18, 2017. The following committee members have found the thesis acceptable in form and content, and that the candidate demonstrated satisfactory knowledge of the subject material.

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Abstract

My dissertation engages the familiar trope that when the full development of the human personality is directed toward the autonomous individual, a form of neo-colonialism emerges that pathologizes students who come from families or cultures that do not practice the autonomous individual as full development of the person. I show 1) that obligatory education and autonomous individualism are strongly coupled, and related 2) that despite stated intentions otherwise, many of the practices of obligatory education tend to exacerbate rather than ameliorate for problems like compulsive consumerism and neo-colonialism. My overall concern is to show that there are ways for educators to take up “the full development of the human personality” (UDHR, 1948, 26.2a) without entailing autonomous individualism. I do this by elaborating a practice approach to organization and development of the person and persons in light of the twenty-first century re-turn to practice. The practice perspective regards practices as the keystone to the formation of social structures and persons. In working with practice, I both commend a practice approach to development of the student and take a practice approach to reading existing theoretical research projects.

My dissertation is a conceptual and descriptive piece that works with three peripheral research projects in organizational studies, sociology, and psychology. While the primary concern is to re-frame what it is for educators to contribute to the development of the person, my dissertation illuminates research and shows connections that are not commonly found in North American educational discourse. This involves
taking up Gherardi’s *ecologies of practices* approach in order to explore the developing person in two different environments: the primal attachment relationship and as student in obligatory education. For the latter, I draw on Meyer’s *neo-institutional research*. In so doing, I rehearse a history of obligatory education and its association with the autonomous individual. To explore the primal attachment relationship, I review Sroufe’s *organizational perspective* on the development of the person, showing that such a perspective should be considered as a theory of practice. As such, it could fill a gap in social theories of practice that under-theorize the person.

Combining psychosocial and sociomaterial approaches to organization and development, I argue that educating for the full development of the person includes identifying and training students in skills that give people the capacity to enact agency. Such skills are predicated on practices associated with secure attachment and not on repudiation of family and culture of origin. Taking such an approach means that teachers and educational experts learn to practice a poetic science that is always situated, accountable, and responsible. Educators who follow such a science will help students to perform and persist as they learn to navigate and negotiate between multiple levels of responsibility: to oneself, to one’s family and community of origin, to one’s fellow learners, to the environment, and to general human flourishing.
Acknowledgements

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Dedication

To Kathy
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<td>Mediated discourse analysis</td>
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<td>SSP</td>
<td>Strange situation procedure</td>
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CHAPTER ONE: OBLIGATORY EDUCATION AND
THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PERSON

Since the mid-twentieth century there has developed a strong coupling of autonomous individualism with mass obligatory education. This coupling can be traced to a number of factors which include a picture of developmental psychology as a staged, linear, and mechanistic construct (see Kincheloe & Horn, 2007; Martin & McLellan, 2013; Ramaekers & Suissa, 2013). Accordingly, it is purported that the proper function of the development of human personality leads to something approximating the autonomous individual (Shotter, 1996). Educationalists operating in such a frame tend to theorize and enact the autonomous individual as the proper goal of education (Burnham, 1905; Dearden, 1972; Schinkel, 2010).

Critics argue that acting as if the autonomous individual is the singular and universal goal of human development contributes to an imbalance of personal over social goals in education (Burman, 2007b; Marshall, 1996a; Martin & McLellan, 2013; Rose, 1990), and can be seen as a kind of neo-colonialism (Deyhle & LeCompte, 1994; D. H. Hargreaves, 1980; Popkewitz, 2008; Tyler et al., 2008; Vadeboncoeur, 1997; Walkerdine, 1993) that is coupled more with consumer capitalism (Devine & Irwin, 2005; Marshall, 1996a; Schwalbe, 1993; Thrift, 2005; Vandenberghhe, 2008) than with helping foster the character and competencies that contribute to students regularly practicing care for others and the environment (Baumrind, 2005; Bronfenbrenner, 1996; Postma, 2003).
These problems have led some critics to suggest that educationalists resist not only the autonomous individual but abandon developmental psychology altogether (Burman, 1994; D. H. Hargreaves, 1980; Walkerdine, 1998). However, such an approach is hard to reconcile with a document like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN General Assembly, 1948) that calls for mass obligatory education to be “directed to the full development of the human personality” (Article 26 (2a)). Rather than giving up on concerns for developmental psychology I will show that educationalists can foster the “full development of the person” without relying on western folk psychologies associated with the self-contained autonomous individual.\(^1\) I point to a holistic and inclusive approach to human development as ongoing practice rather than as linear progress marked by a set of stages or milestones. Human development as ongoing practice is relational, recursive, and complex; it is in a word, ecological.

A socio-ecological perspective of child development is concerned for the dynamics of continuity and change across the full spectrum of the biological, the personal, and the social. To speak of ecology is to speak of the inter-connectedness of the whole and its parts and the way that the different elements are distinct; while at the same time being implicated in each other and in the whole. The socio-ecological perspective is grounded in twenty-first century organizational practice theories (see Nicolini, 2013; Schatzki, 2002) and elaborated in Sroufe’s organizational perspective on the development of the person (see Sroufe, Egeland, Carlson, & Collins, 2005). From the practice perspective “no element (either human or artificial) has ontological priority over the

\(^1\)When I speak of “western folk psychologies” it is not to indicate that they are mythical or false, but rather to highlight that they are not universal; that they are produced within in a certain cultural context.
others. Hence, action does not start from the actors and their intentionality; rather, it ‘takes place’ in the sociomaterial relations that connect those elements together” (Gherardi, 2012b, p. 225; see also Orlikowski, 2007). An ecological approach to practices would permit teachers, parents, and other educational experts to more fully cooperate in the full development of the student in ways that are connected to but not determined by students’ families and cultures of origin. An ecologies of practices approach would entail teachers and educational experts practicing a poetic science that is always situated, accountable, and responsible (see Haraway, 1988; Law, 2008). In such settings, educators will help students to perform and persist, if not flourish, as they learn to navigate and negotiate between multiple relationships: with oneself, with one’s family and community of origin, and with fellow learners.

Practice is understood in many ways, even by those who apply the term rigorously. For now the reader may find it helpful to think of practice as productive or prototypical routinized behaviour that accomplishes more than mere repetition. Throughout my dissertation, I will unfold a heuristic and provocative approach to practice as the smallest and prior unit of social analysis. The practice approach informs the entire project. Not only do I take a practice approach to understanding human development, I also take a practice perspective to my research methodology and employ a practice grammar in writing the dissertation. I will begin to elaborate the practice approach later in this chapter; first I will give a brief introduction to the history of obligatory education and its relation to autonomous individualism. After that I will introduce the re-turn to practice and then conclude this chapter with an elaboration of the dissertation as a whole.
The Anglo-European world of the nineteenth century was a place of revolutionary change in political structures and in technological development. As modern nation-states emerged and consolidated, they began to establish, experiment with, and battle over new political and ideological hegemonies starting in Europe and the Americas and extending through a new wave of colonization into Africa, Asia and Australasia. One of the most important technologies for nineteenth century European nation-states was the development of compulsory state-funded and regulated education. From its inception, the aim of state-education was to form children into good citizens: literate, numerate, dependable, and patriotic. Compulsory public education was designed to serve the nation-states in a number of ways, including: inculcating national identity; preparing boys for the military and civil service; developing children for the economic, scientific, and technical progress of the nation; aligning children to the political system; warehousing children who had been taken out of the labour market; and assimilating children (and their families) into the metropolitan culture of the nation-state.

A more-or-less collateral achievement of all this was a kind of mass-produced individualism (Francisco O. Ramirez & Boli, 1987). Initially, this individualism was more inherent, even accidental. If children’s allegiance to the state was to take priority, then other social connections had to become more tenuous. For instance, Benjamin Rush (1786), a signer of the Declaration of Independence and an early school promoter, argued that one of the purposes of education was to prepare boys to defend their nation, but if boys were to be prepared for war then their allegiance to the nation-state had to be stronger than allegiance to family. Other school promoters called for outright
disenfranchisement of children from their family and culture. For example, moralist school promoters were convinced that obligatory education was the best way to rescue children from the cycle of poverty in which their parents were stuck (Roebuck, 1864; Ryerson, 1868). On the other hand, metropolitan school promoters used mass education to “civilize and assimilate” the children of more “passive” or “primitive” peoples (Armstrong, 1881; S. E. Simons, 1902). For such school promoters, the goal of education was not to produce autonomous individuals, but to produce citizens committed to Anglo-European notions of progress. If civilization was to advance (or be saved), it required a radical restructuring of the child as pupil rather than child as participant in family or primordial social group (see Curtis, 2003; Prentice, 2004).

Over the course of the twentieth century, obligatory education has become more and more oriented to developing and rationalizing self-contained autonomous individuals whether or not such an outcome is achievable or is in the best interests of the student, the student’s family and culture of origin, or even the nation-state that provides the education (Callan, 1994; Carr, 2000; Cuypers, 1992; Dearden, 1972; Frank, Meyer, & Miyahara, 1995; Frank O. Ramirez, 2003). The autonomous individual is coupled with obligatory education in multiple sites and is rationalized not just overtly in developmental psychology (Waterman, 1984), but is also manifest in the imbalance of personal over social goals in many educational sites (Martin & McLellan, 2013). This imbalance, supported by a New Public Management that prioritizes schooling over learning (Kemmis, Wilkinson, et al., 2014) is but one of the contested sites in education.²

²Kemmis (2012b) makes a normative distinction between education and schooling:
I return to the history of obligatory education throughout the dissertation. In the next section I give a brief introduction to the practice approach. As already stated, I point to an ecologies of practices approach to human development as one way to resolve the problem of the strong coupling between obligatory education and autonomous individualism. But I’m not just writing about the importance of practice, I’m also employing a practice grammar and use a practice lens to examine existing research projects. In some ways, my dissertation is as much about doing practice research as it is about obligatory education and the full development of the person.

**Re-turn to Practice**

Around the turn of the new millennium there has been a re-turn to practice in social sciences. Prefigured by a number of earlier practice turns, the re-turn to practice takes “practices” as the main matter-of-concern in the social sciences. The re-turn to practice can be noticed by the way in which theorists, analysts, and practitioners have taken to using *practice* idiomatically (Law, 2004a; Feldman & Orlikowski, 2011; Reckwitz, 2002b; Schatzki, Knorr-Cetina, & Savigny, 2001; Rouse, 2007). Those taking the practice perspective understand that everyday practices are consequential in producing both the individual and the social; and that practices are mutually constituted with persons, other practices, and the material. As such, the practice perspective tends to treat many familiar dichotomies such as structure/agency; mind/body; continuity/change;

Because our common usage obscures and perhaps erases the important distinction between education and schooling, the philosophical and pedagogical origins of the discipline and competing intellectual traditions of Education itself are often lost, and become invisible, to contemporary hearers (pp. 894-895). While I appreciate Kemmis’ concerns, many of my other interlocutors use education and schooling interchangeably so I will follow suit.
individual/collective as complex recursive arrangements rather than as irreducible dualisms (Feldman & Orlikowski, 2011; see also Ortner, 1984). Practice based research starts with exploring the questions, “What do doings do?” and "What are practices connected to?” This is distinct from classical social theories that tend to start with either, “What do individuals do?” or “What does the social do?” Practice approaches are also to be distinguished from high modern culturalist theories that tend to focus on what minds or texts do (see Reckwitz, 2002b).

**Practice Descriptions**

The term *practice* is polysemic both in the everyday and in practice theorizing. It is common to speak of *practice* as the learning that takes place before you become proficient at doing something. A person *practices* a musical instrument in the hopes of becoming good enough to *play* it. Another familiar way of speaking of *practice* is in terms of belonging to a professional field with a regulated body of knowledge: legal practice, medical practice, teaching practice. *Practice* is also commonly used to refer to situated doings with implicit or explicit rationality, as when a principal begins school assemblies with singing the national anthem (see Corradi, Gherardi, & Verzelloni, 2008). Putting these together in one sentence: If you want to be part of the medical practice (field), you must practice (learning to do) the practice of good hygiene (set of ongoing rationalized activities).

For twenty-first century practice theories, practice is all this and more: practice is about the recurrent actions that make up learning, belonging, and the patterns of everyday life. Practice is “a socially sustained mode of action in a given context” (Gherardi, 2011, p. 52). As noted above, practice is polysemic in everyday discourses, but rather than
being lost to ambiguity we are able to use the term helpfully and accurately. However, the polysemy of practice becomes much more extended in practice theorizing. For this, and other reasons, there is no unified theory of practice (see Schatzki et al., 2001).³ Rather, different theorists describe and theorize practice in ways that are funded by their discipline and research interests. For instance, Pickering (1992), whose focus is on explaining science as practice tells us, “practice is where nature and society and the space between them are continually made, un-made, and remade” (p. 21). Ginev’s (2013) concern for hermeneutics and existentialism comes out in her definition: “Practices are at once thematic entities (in particular, empirical objects of inquiry) and, in their interrelatedness, horizons in which the reality of socio-cultural entities (rules, social roles, normative statuses, networks of interaction, etc.) becomes disclosed” (p. 4). Not only are practices defined by the thematic concerns of the author, they can also be explained from different relations to the interpretive horizons they entail.

**Three Perspectives on Practice**

Gherardi (2009b), the main influence on my theorizing of practice, identifies three common research stances in practice-based studies of organizations: objective (from outside); subjective (from inside), (see Bourdieu, 1990; Evered & Louis, 1981 for further

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³I use *theory* in reference to a more-or-less elaborate explanatory system that can be encoded and decontextualized and used to analyse and demonstrate relations between different conditions. From the practice perspective, theory is not discovered, but rather is an accomplishment of theorizing. What counts as theorizing is a matter of ongoing negotiation in different academic communities. As explained by Nicolini & Monteiro (2017),

Theory, in the practice approach, is less a direct description of the social world and more a device to grasp and represent it. It should be considered mainly as a heuristic package to plot the social world via an infra-language—instead of a meta-language from which to subsume all phenomena (p. 15).
on subjective-objective; inside-outside); and connections in action (ecological). The first two forms of analysis focus on practices in a particular site, while the last one follows the traces of the practice and practice accomplishments in the wider environment. Broadly speaking, Gherardi (2006) defines practice as “a mode, relatively stable in time and socially recognized, of ordering heterogeneous items into a coherent set” (p. 34). From the outside, “a practice is such when it is socially recognized as an institutionalized doing” (2010, p. 505). Analysis from the outside is concerned with routines, with arrays, and with accountability (often in terms of the good and the beautiful). Analyzing practices from the inside relates to the organization of actor’s behaviour. “Seen from the inside, practice is a knowledgeable collective action that forges relations and connections among all resources available and all the constraints present” (2010, p. 505). Analysis from the inside is concerned with the intra-actions of the elements that make up the practice.

In the third program, “practice is viewed as the effect of a weaving-together of interconnections in action, or as a ‘doing’ of society” (2009, p. 118), or as “life-world, and dwelling” (Gherardi & Perrotta, 2014b, p. 136; see also Sandberg & Dall’Alba, 2009). Ecological analysis is concerned with how practice is entangled with other matters of concern (practices, actors, events, material conditions, environments) and how those entanglements are related to power, exploitation, emancipation, attraction, and attachment (Gherardi, 2009d). Together, these three perspectives can be taken up as a kind of praxiography as the study of the “continuous tension between recognizing the dynamic, continuously changing character of practice on the one side, and the
identification of stable, regulated patterns, routines and reproduction on the other” (Bueger, 2013, p. 9; see also Law, 2004a).

**Practice Sensitivity**

My dissertation takes an “ecologies of practices” (Kemmis, Wilkinson, et al., 2014) approach to address the imbalance of personal over social goals in obligatory education (Martin & McLellan, 2013). I take up the concept, ecologies of practices, in a more generalised way than does Kemmis et al., who are more narrowly concerned with the “interrelated practices” at play in “the Educational Complex” (Wilkinson & Kemmis, 2015, p. 344). The generalised approach to ecologies of practices that I articulate is funded by reading Sroufe’s (2005) organizational perspective on the development of the person through a twenty-first century practice lens (see Feldman & Orlikowski, 2011; Gherardi, 2012a; Reckwitz, 2002b). Kemmis et al. approach focuses on the way that certain practice arrangements appear to be alive and “are interdependent, and develop in relation to one another” (Kemmis, Wilkinson, et al., 2014, p. 14). The more generalized approach is concerned not just with practice arrangements but their intra-actions, the background, and the surround. A generalized approach to ecologies of practices supports Kemmis et al.’s engagement with the Educational Complex in ways that are more specific (attending to student as student-in-community as well as student-in-school) and

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4Unless the context indicates otherwise, whenever I use the term “ecologies of practices” I am referring to the approach that is being developed in this dissertation rather than the one elaborated by Kemmis and colleagues.

5Gherardi and others take up Barad’s (2003) notion of intra-action: “subjects and objects are dynamically, agentially, and iteratively co-articulated in ‘intra-action’” (Gherardi, 2016, p. 5).
also more general (attending to organizational learning and not just learning in the Educational Complex).

My dissertation involves an assemblage of interpretations, explanations, elaborations, and appropriations. It is a mixture of insights, entanglements, and hauntings (see S. Clegg, 2012; Hey, 2006; Hopwood, 2015b for a discussion of “haunting” and research method). Mass public education has accomplished much but it is haunted by its history as a tool of colonial assimilation. I am haunted by my life-long involvement in Christian higher education and the role the church has played in education for assimilation. I am haunted in a different way by the family resemblances among a number of theoretical research projects concerned with the examination of productive patterns of activity. During my PhD course work I was introduced to or came across a number of theoretical approaches that “stuck.” My original research proposal had involved investigating the way that different school structures contributed toward “character formation” and though I have moved on from earlier construals, my current project is still connected with the original proposal. I became convinced of the importance of infant attachment during our family’s experience of fostering over 25 children and my own nearly 10 years of board work with the Saskatchewan Foster

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6Hey (2006) says,

How often [academic researcher’s] own cherished analytical rationality is broken up by glimpses into the imagination of more provocative thinkers. I have come to the conclusion that it is not so much that we self-consciously assemble all the resources for the making of research imaginaries as those vivid ideas (and frequently their authors) come to haunt us (2006, p. 439).

7Theoretical research projects (or programs) move a field forward through the existence of strategic research communities that test and develop a body of theories and related empirical data (see J. Berger & Zelditch, 1993).
Families Association. My interest in the rise and spread of obligatory education arose out of a learned sensibility to colonialism and post-colonialism which is a recurring theme throughout the dissertation. It is harder to recall the interest I have taken in practice approach. I first noticed a turn to practice through reading Bourdieu as part of the PhD course work, but the sense that there was something more to practice emerged while investigating the rift between social constructionism and experimentalism in social psychology (Jost & Kruglanski, 2002) during my PhD comprehensive exams. As I go through my research journal, the interest in practice theory was often suppressed, but I kept finding myself following research that led to a greater and greater appreciation for the explanatory power of practice theory especially in regard to practice and learning:

The theoretical proposal that knowledge should be defined as an activity, as a collective and distributed “doing”, led to its consideration as an activity situated in time and space, and therefore as taking place in work practices. Such practices therefore constituted the locus of learning, working and innovating; and these in their turn could be conceptualized as practical activities, as a collective bricolage enacted by those participating in a practice, mobilizing resources, using instruments, and employing a contingent and goal-directed rationality (Gherardi, 2009c, p. 353).

A word about myself: I write as an Anglo-European male who has spent most of his adult life studying and working in higher education. As I take up this study, I can write reflexively about these issues, but I cannot evade the privilege they have granted me. At the same time, I write as an outsider. Most of my post-secondary education and work life has been in and with parochial schools. I write about, but have not worked in the public education system. I am looking in on, but am not a part of the research accomplishments of attachment theorists, twenty-first century practice theorists, neo-institutionalists, and critical pedagogues. I write then with a certain level of disconcertment, not only with the subject—the autonomous individual and obligatory
education—but also with my place in the conversation. One writer who has helped me come to terms with such disconcertment is John Law and his overall approach to method assemblage (Law, 2004a; Law & Lin, 2010).

**Method-Assemblage**

My dissertation involves method-assemblage which is a process of bundling, of assembling, or better of recursive self-assembling in which the elements put together are not fixed in shape, do not belong to a larger pre-given list but are constructed at least in part as they are entangled together. This means that there can be no fixed formula or general rules for determining good and bad bundles, and that (what I will now call) ‘method assemblage’ grows out of but also creates its hinterlands which shift in shape as well as being largely tacit, unclear and impure (Law, 2004a, p. 42).

Working in the hinterlands calls for the realignment of concepts and theories, but not in the interests of “the fixing, ritualizing or canonizing of any specific method or change practice—as if a cookbook to success” (Gergen, 2003, p. 47). As assemblage, the researcher’s work is,

more like that of a poet laboring in a continuously evolving context of meaning. The poet cannot simply repeat past arrangements of words to press the envelope of meaning outward. Rather, the continuous challenge is to reassemble the existing vocabularies, thereby speaking into the present to create the future anew (Gergen, 2003, p. 47).

Law’s method-assemblage is mostly about the way that practices are pieced together. He elaborates,

all of us are allegorists because we read between the lines and manifest realities that are not being spoken about in as many words. We play, that is, with the boundaries between that which is Othered and that which is manifest. We might thus think of allegory as a mode of discovery—so long as we understand that in a world of enactment, allegory is also crafting what it is discovering. That is the first point. The second is equally interesting. It is that as allegorists, a lot of the time we are crafting and manifesting realities that are non-coherent. That are difficult to fit together into a single smooth reality (Law, 2004a, p. 92).
Given this difficulty, my task is to act as if there is some order to the diversity of human development, complicated and complex as it is. As such, I work heuristically, which means that more than “bringing to light overlooked truths” I am working “to expand and to differentiate our conceptual framework” of the development of the person (Reckwitz, 2012, p. 243). My dissertation will be more articulative than eliminative (Nicolini, 2013). Further, I am making an argument that can be followed more than a case that must be closed. The claims I am making—that education for autonomy can be a form of education for assimilation and that as such, educators should partner with rather than repudiate parents—are not new. What is new is the particular configuration of the argument: the promise of an ecologies of practices approach in helping to re-culture education without re-colonizing students and their families.

I’m working with descriptions rather than “variable-based causal analysis” (Saito, 2011, p. 129). As a whole, the dissertation works as a kind of prospective history of ideas. The account I give of obligatory education is neither Whig history nor entirely a critical history, but instead is an assemblage of historical markers and moments that help us see that the coupling of contemporary education practices with autonomous individualism is predictable even if it was not determined. Later I will rehearse the way mass schooling was enacted in the emerging nation-states of nineteenth century provided the resources or template for the rise and spread of autonomous individualism. This claim is not surprising, mostly I am rehearsing and thickening out a familiar story, but I tell that story in my own way.

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8From the practice perspective, heuristic theorizing is largely additive (see Heuts & Mol, 2013; Nicolini & Monteiro, 2017). The theorist does not necessarily take a stance against or try to move beyond what is accomplished in the heuristic.
I assemble several strands at play in both *practice theory* and developmental psychology to produce a “sheath.” Such assemblage is idiosyncratic in that the selection is my own, and the tying together is my own, but what is produced does not belong to me. I am not inventing the information or the methods, but rather I am re-arranging and re-purposing an existing group of methods and texts in the interests of exploring how obligatory education can be arranged in ways that respect and develop the student’s situated competence. I point to the common ground among theories that explore meaningful patterns of activity. This is translation work, but the translation work I point to is more grammatical than logical; more geometric than semiotic.¹⁹ I move from one space to another based on a shared vocabulary and shared matters of concern.

Assemblage involves a kind of ordering. Orderings are temporary though persistent. They are sensible though not universally so. In much ordinary discourse, orderings are suggested by the topics but not in any essential way. This paragraph is illustrative of the kind of assembling/ordering of which I type.¹⁰ The topic of assemblage and ordering suggests a certain kind of choice and arrangement of words. The particular ordering of words and sentences in this paragraph is not the first ordering I typed, neither are these my final words on the matter; this paragraph might be rewritten for a different audience or an editor might make some changes. Finally, the talk of assemblage and ordering would not be sensible to someone who could not read English; and even for

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¹⁹In translation theory, “translation is both the movement of an entity in space and time, and its translation from one context to another” (Gherardi, 2004b, p. 62; see also Latour, 1999).

¹⁰In fact, in previous versions, the preceding sentence began: “The preceding sentences are . . .” Of course this is obvious, but taking a practice perspective includes this kind of reflection.
those who read English, the above assemblage/ordering might not be sensible without attaining a certain reading proficiency or embracing a certain discourse around knowing and cultural schemes (more on cultural schemes below).

Assemblage might be taken as an escape from rigor, but in the kind of assemblage work that Law models, the rigor is in the wonder: in exploring and elaborating the hinterlands, connections, and non-coherences that emerge whenever we organize (Law, 2004a, 2011b; Law & Singleton, 2003). Further, in producing a dissertation of this sort, a certain kind of ordering is expected. For instance, McLaughlin (2009) identifies three common kinds of arguments in PhD dissertations: ”argument as structure,” “argument as confrontation,” and ”argument as dialogical encounter” (p. 245). Using McLaughlin’s analytic terms, my dissertation is ordered around presenting an argument as dialogical encounter. However, the encounter I am writing about is not a “genuine dialogue between alternative positions” (p. 246), but rather is a mediation between disciplinary fields that do not appear to be in dialogue. As part of mediation, I take up a modest hermeneutic informed by John Law’s exploration of a modest sociology (more on modest sociology below). Assemblages fail when they fail to hold together or when they fail to move the reader. Assemblage work lacks rigor when it proves to be inaccurate, incoherent, inarticulate or otherwise unhelpful. As I said earlier, assemblage work is more expansive than eliminative; it is “serious description” in the interests of “the development of social-scientific theory” (Saito, 2011, p. 129; see also Abbott, 2001). As such, assemblage fails if it bides no further discussion, exploration, experimentation, or extrapolation.
In this project, I’m describing the relation between a number of relational theories. From the practice perspective, theories are discursive practices, or performative tools that give us a handle on ordered activities. Over the next two chapters I elaborate on the practice approach as a family of theories, approaches, and sensitivities. This includes elaborating an ecologic of practices that takes into account the way practices are configured in and with their context. In the fourth chapter I take an unusual move and explore how neo-institutional research and theorizing on education can be regarded as a practice theory. In the fifth chapter, I explore how theorizing around the role of attachment human development should be regarded as belonging to the practice approach. Throughout my dissertation, I take a critical and culturalist stance towards the psy-complex and the way education is implicated in colonial impulses. Such an approach is funded by the history of ideas as elaborated by Andreas Reckwitz.

**History of Ideas**

Reckwitz has helped to articulate the differences between the practice perspective and other common social and cultural constructions of the social. According to Gabrielle Spiegel, past president of the American Historical Association and recently Dean of Faculty at John Hopkins University, Andreas Reckwitz “offers the most comprehensive guide currently available to new trends in social theorizing” (Spiegel, 2005, p. 241). Reckwitz is part of “a new generation of sociologists, social theorists and political philosophers. . . . who have introduced a paradigmatic change in the social sciences—

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11Discursive practices render things into text and text into power. “Discourse is a practice generative of other practices, a mode of ordering distinguished by its capacity to handle both coherence and incoherence, harmonies and dissonances, consonance and cacophony” (Gherardi & Nicolini, 2002, p. 433)
from structuralism and the critique of domination to pragmatism, phenomenology and the hermeneutics of interpretation.” Though multi-disciplinary and with various political allegiances, this group has two main projects: resisting both determinism and historicism and insisting “on the ordinary competence of actors” (Vandenberghhe, 2006, p. 70); all in the interests of “formulating a vocabulary that renders both cultural reproduction and cultural change understandable” (Bevir, Erickson, Harrington, & Reckwitz, 2002, p. 123). This involves a shift in both phenomenology and hermeneutics: a phenomenology of agency in relation to cultural (or sociomaterial) order and a hermeneutic of how agency, order, and meaning develop from and are organised around semantic and other practices (see Spiegel, 2008).12

Reckwitz’s explanation and exploration of practice theory is a prospective history, a history of ideas that helps explore the recent past even as it participates in a near future. Reckwitz’s understanding of history of ideas is contrasted with someone like Bevir’s (1999). Whereas Bevir follows a belief model of culture, Reckwitz follows a scheme model of culture found not only in “structuralism, but also as elaborated by some authors [early Heidegger, Gadamer, late Wittgenstein] of the hermeneutic tradition.” This involves working with a “culturalist vocabulary that contains a picture of ‘culture as schemes’ (or as distinctions, classification systems, etc.)” rather than “a vocabulary that conceptualizes ‘culture as beliefs’ (or as ideas, propositions, etc.)” (Bevir et al., 2002, p. 119). Cultural schemes are second-order semantic systems that are the basis for cultural reasoning and ideas. Cultural schemes then function similar to language, the “first-order

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12There will be a more elaborate exploration of agency starting in the fifth chapter. For now, agency refers to the capacity to anticipate, orchestrate, carry-on, or contribute to continuity and change—in self, others, or the environment.
semantic system.” that “enables and forces the speakers to follow a certain classification system on the basis of which objects become identifiable objects” (p. 120).

Classic examples of first order semantic systems include ski instructors who have multiple terms for what everyone else sees simply as snow and avid gardeners who are able to name and see plants and pests at a taxonomic level inaccessible to the majority of the population. Whereas the ski instructor may notice the rose bushes on the way down the slope, the avid gardener knows not only that it is a dormant rose bush, but also the species, variety and cultivar. Gardeners know to protect their roses from snow; ski instructors know how to help clients see various kinds of snow so they can enjoy the “champagne” and navigate around the “crud.” Second-order semantic systems (cultural schemes, habitus, episteme, truth regimes, social imaginary, constitutive rules, language games) distinguish, “classify, identify and evaluate objects on a more abstract plane” (Bevir et al., 2002, p. 121). Borrowing from Dorothy Holland (1992), “these schemes and models offer ‘simplified worlds’ on the basis of which cultural collectivities structure their social practices.” These schemes can be analysed and engineered, but they are not propositions; second order semantic systems “are not held to be true in themselves”; rather they “provide the background of what can be held true” (Bevir et al., 2002, p. 121).

It is second order semantic systems that enable people to regard devoting time and money to raising inedible plants or going down snowy slopes on sticks as sensible projects.

Following Reckwitz’ approach to culture as schemes rather than as beliefs (as per Bevin) helps us to explain and

better understand the ‘conservative’ effect of culture, its limiting and constraining power, its preconscious effect, often hidden to the agents themselves. . . . This enabling and constraining power consists in cultural schemes that are not held to
be true in themselves, but that suggest simplified worlds which provide the background of what can be held true (2002, p. 121).

This is not to say that cultural schemes determine how people think. Rather, quite the opposite. A culturalist understanding of the history of ideas resists all sorts of “simple causality and linear determinism.” Second order semantic systems provide the connection and conditions for events to occur. Culture as scheme rather than belief helps provide an “account for how culture is sustained, mediated, replicated, and changed” by actors using language and other things (Spiegel, 2008, p. 412). The cultural system is not a set of beliefs, propositions, or arguments that can be theorized but rather the system “exists solely in the continuity bestowed upon it by the succession of practices that bring it to life” (p. 414; see also Sewell, 1996). Reckwitz’ scheme model of culture then helps explain cultural change and reproduction without relying on technological determinism, cultural relativism, or the myth of the autonomous serial rational decision maker.

In fact, each of these three ways of explaining cultural change and reproduction operate at the level of social imaginary and not just as rationalized beliefs. As such, the autonomous individual exists not just as an element in arguments about the proper ends of education, it is also part of late-twentieth century educational habitus. True, there are agents of ideology who promote autonomous individualism as the goal of education or the proper function of individuals (see Dearden, 1984; Waterman, 1984), but often the autonomous individual is just assumed—as in arguments for and against parent choice in public schooling (see Schinkel, 2010; Ruderman & Godwin, 2000; Marshall, 1996b). My dissertation is more concerned with the autonomous individual as the “basis of cultural reasoning and ideas” than it is with the autonomous individual as an idea to be argued for. This is the goal of my dissertation is not to show that the notion of the autonomous
individual is false; rather the goal is to offer a different stance or to expand the
vocabulary around human development so that educators can find ways to provide the
conditions that enable outcomes that do not require the autonomous individual.

**Law’s Modest Sociology**

Writing an interdisciplinary project as an outsider requires a certain kind of bold
modesty. To help give vocabulary to what such modesty looks like in practice, I am using
terms and concepts derived from John Law’s exploration of a modest sociology as
outlined in *Organizing Modernity* (1994). Law helped to expand and export Michel
Callon and Bruno Latour’s earlier framing of actor network theory (ANT).13 Law has
been an important part of the practice turn and is well skilled in discourse analysis and
ethnomethodology with a focus on science, technology, and society (STS). He takes a
feminist/postcolonial stance overall but especially in his writing and teaching on
academic research methods and methodology (Law, 2004a, 2011c; Law & Lin, 2010;
Law & Mol, 2002; Law, Ruppert, & Savage, 2011; Law & Singleton, 2000; Law & Urry,
2004; Mol & Law, 2005).

Law’s methodology in *Organizing Modernity* is an interplay between symbolic
interactionism and ANT (with a Foucaultian sensibility). But his method is not simply
additive or eclectic, but an early framing of assemblage as method. In the introduction to
the book, Law identifies four particular resources for a modest sociology: symmetry, non-
reduction, recursive process, and reflexivity (1994, p. 9).

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13The main tenets of ANT can be summarized in *three* sentences: 1 Science is social . . . 2 Society is natural . . . 3 Nature and society are co-constructed in and through socio-technical networks that associate humans and non-humans into a seamless web (Vandenberghe, 2006, pp. 74–75).
**Symmetry.** In a modest sociology, “both true and false knowledge deserves sociological analysis. And—this is equally important—they deserve analysis *in the same terms*” (Law, 1994, p. 10). Normally, when taken up by STS or ANT, symmetry suggests that the researcher isn’t taking sides (Law, 2008). Symmetry is helpful for a chastened critical history. It permits us to do critical history on our own time, on our own cherished cause. This means that while my work is political, my critique of autonomous individualism is more concerned with the accomplishments of obligatory education than in reading between the lines for the intentions of its promoters or enactors.

**Non-reduction.** Another assumption for a modest sociology is non-reduction. In much of contemporary psychological research, the principle of parsimony makes reductionism not just a habit but a requirement. While parsimony is productive for certain kinds of knowing; in the human sciences, parsimony can cut us off from loose ends and round about connections that might be the difference that makes the difference. Valsiner (2007) argues that the principle of parsimony “forces the investigator to overlook the emergence of new regulatory mechanisms” that emerge over a lifespan (p. 180). For Law, the social is too complex and messy to be tied down to parsimony (2004a). That does not mean there is no place for simplicity, for “simplifications, while they last, represent economies of scale” (Law, 1994, p. 109), but in the kind of modest sociology advocated by Law, parsimony is neither an essential process nor the ultimate goal.

Non-reduction is not the same as anti-reductionism. Rather, non-reduction involves noticing, naming, and recalling: patterns *and* processes, drivers *and* the driven, regularities *and* contingencies, the emerging *and* the disappeared. What is more, non-reduction applies to time itself. In a modest sociology, time cannot be reduced to either
the diachronic or the synchronic. For Law, “a modest sociology is one which tries to occupy the precarious place where time has not been turned into cause or reduction [diachronics], and where relations have not been froze into the snapshot of synchronicity” (Law, 1994, p. 13). This parallels Serres and Latour (1995): “Every historical era is likewise multitemporal, simultaneously drawing from the obsolete, the contemporary, and the futuristic. An object, a circumstance, is thus polychronic, multitemporal, and reveals a time that is gathered together, with multiple pleats” (p. 60). As we will see later, approaching time as non-linear is a critical insight both for the practice perspective and for Sroufe’s representation of development.

**Recursive process.** For Law, the recursive process is one of the more difficult of the assets to keep in mind. Taking a more thorough-going practice perspective helps us to see that the recursive is already implicated in symmetry and non-reduction. That is, symmetry and non-reduction make the most sense when we remember that, the social is a set of process, of transformations. These are moving, acting, interacting. They are generating themselves. Perhaps we can impute patterns in these movements. But here’s the trick, the crucial and most difficult move that we need to make. We need to say that the patterns, the channels down which they flow, are not different in kind from whatever is channelled by them. . . . The social world is this remarkable emergent phenomenon: in its processes it shapes its own flows. Movement and the organization of the movement are not different (Law, 1994, p. 15).

The recursive is related to gestalt flow and “the medium is the message” (McLuhan, 1964). Noticing the recursive relation between bodies, objects, discourses, and the social is part of taking up the practice turn.

Understandings may form intentions, but practice does not simply enact intentions—the doing is always something more than and different from what was intended. Nor does practice alone form understandings—thinking and saying are also discursively formed, in the common stream of a shared language used by interlocutors who stand in some particular kind of relationship with one another. Nor are the conditions that shape practices entirely created by this or that person’s
understandings or practices—they are formed through larger, longer collective histories of thought and action (Kemmis, McTaggart, & Nixon, 2014c, p. 62).

Recursivity is also implicated with the polychronic, where time flows in upon itself and “both the past and the future are in the actions of the present” (Simpson, 2009, p. 1337). Let me illustrate this aspect of the recursive where effects can be seen to precede causes. For a number of years I lived in intergenerational home: grandparents, parents, and two young children. One afternoon, the four-year-old put together a bricolage from an old toy, some feathers, and some tape. At supper, we had a visitor who was moving back into the area. At one point in the conversation, the visitor was explaining to us that her husband was going to be flying back with the cats in a couple of days. The four-year-old, who knew the cats, retrieved her bricolage and announced to our guest, “Here, I made this for your cats.” Her father said, under his breath in a way that the adults could hear, “Yeah, just now.” Everyone else at the table chuckled at father’s “correction” of child’s sense of time and our guest thanked the four-year-old for the gift. But as I reflected in the moment, the four-year-old may have been giving a more accurate account than her father would permit. A modest sociology recognizes and embraces that not only is the principle of parsimony unhelpful and a misrepresentation of scientific processes, so too is an overtly linear and diachronic understanding of the relation between intentions, action, process, and outcomes (Pickering & Guzik, 2008).

**Reflexivity.** The fourth component of a modest methodology is reflexivity. A modest sociology is reflexive because “our own ordering is a verb” (Law, 1994, p. 17). Revisiting the previous three terms, I write reflexively because symmetrically, I am as much a product, a *recursive effect*, as are the persons/events/processes/discourses I am
writing about. I write reflexively because, as per non-reduction, I am in part constituted in/by/from/of the recursive process of research and writing.

There is a caution. Law suggests that if Giddens is right “that reflexivity is the latest—the final?—triumph of the modern project . . . it’s a pretty corrosive triumph” (Law, 1994, p. 17). When it becomes a part of the modern pastoral project (Foucault, 1982) reflexive writing can parody a tent revival as writers confess their part in privilege: WASP, male, ambulatory, life-time employed, home-owner, heteronormative, educated, employed spouse, age, etc. While these terms represent a difference in practices, place, and privilege, and while they make a difference in my writing, the writer cannot be reduced to those things. Reflexivity is more than self-regulation. It is also to “expose some of the contingencies and uncertainties”; not just personal, but also theoretical and political. Reflexivity is other than a systematic deconstruction of my own writing (Law, 1994, p. 17). My writing is telling a story of myself, but I am also telling a story about developmental psychology and the practice turn, and I’m making some connections to the Anglo-European nation-state and oppression and excess. And I’m telling a story in a particular way as part of a dissertation process that is full of histories and traditions that I can only partially know. And reflexivity reminds me that in telling the stories there will be silences. Some of them will be intentional. Some of them will be from ignorance. In a modest sociology, writing reflexively means there should be more intentional silences and fewer silences from ignorance.

Taking the practice approach is a disruptive task that includes consciously taking up new vocabularies and grammars which while “challenging to parse, they serve the purpose of allowing the explicit theorizing of consequential, nondualistic and mutually
constitutive relations that enact the world through everyday practice” (Feldman & Orlikowski, 2011, p. 18). Theorizing practice often entails practicing what appears to be a flurry of hyper-intellectual language. But this is deemed to be better than the misunderstanding that would arise from a more “straightforward” approach, knowing that in the current social imaginary (see Taylor, 2004), the more straightforward approach is not actually more accurate, just more familiar: “it is a messy business trying to talk and write about the world in continual performative flux” (Carolan, 2013, p. 176). An ecologies of practices approach invokes a disruptive grammar because it performs an unruly epistemology—one that is more comfortable with complexity and incompleteness and the way that ordering is performed in practice:

Practice theories accept that discursive practices are central to the construction and reproduction of all organizational and social things, but resist the idea that language and discourse (understood as language in action) alone can explain all the features of organizational life. Practice approaches suggest that we need theories that take into account the heterogeneous nature of the world we live in, which includes an appreciation that objects and materials often bite back at us and resist our attempts to envelope them with our discourses (Nicolini, 2013, p. 8).

The Dissertation

There are three stages to my dissertation. First, I unfold an ecologies of practices approach to development and organization. In the second stage I use this ecologic to

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14I have placed working definitions of important terms in footnotes throughout the dissertation. I don’t necessarily give the definition on the first occurrence of the term, but rather place the footnotes where I think the context requires or permits giving a practice definition of the term.

15Organization is an accomplishment of organizing. Organizing is a constellation of embedded practices. Ecological perspective on organizing shift focus from organizational concepts, attitudes, and behaviour to the gathering, arranging, interweaving, and mending of a texture of practices (see Gherardi, 2012b, p. 224).
thicken out Meyer and colleagues’ account of the rise of mass obligatory education and its relation to autonomous individualism. Then I read Sroufe’s representation of human development from the same socio-ecological perspective. In the third stage, I point to how the learning from the first two stages might be applied as site based educational development. The second stage can be understood as exploring and explaining how people develop and are organized around two histories: a psychosocial history of attachment and a sociomaterial history of the autonomous individual in obligatory education. Such explanations are heuristic; my dissertation is an ordering event, a process, a set of practices that exist polychronically and come into being recursively.

From a practice perspective, dissertating is mutually constituted by several elements: the project itself; the PhD student authoring it; the feedback and feedforward of the supervisor and committee; the traditions around dissertating; the subject being researched; the articles and books written, being written, and to be written; the PhD student’s education and future education; and other generative relationships. In a Gadamerian hermeneutic, it is the organizing and reorganizing of thought that helps the writer to understand her or his reading/thinking/writing. It is the opportunity that presents itself that helps any of us to make sense out of what we were doing.

I’ve been assembling this dissertation actively for five years now, but it started long ago. Researching, writing, reflecting, receiving feedback, journaling, probing are all part of a feedforward process that has moved me closer and closer to completion. The recursive process and polychronic nature of dissertating are hot and very proximate to me as the writer; I’m always experimenting with various orderings (even completion is a
mode of ordering). I know that part of dissertating is going where no person has gone before, but it also needs to be organized with a coherence that will be sensible to others:

It is important to observe that coherence is an outcome too—something that the networks of the social generate for themselves. A consequence of this is that things don’t cohere, in and of themselves. And neither, notwithstanding the view of the logicians do arguments. So the issue of coherence is also empirical, or more specifically, a matter of ordering success. If things appear to go together, and nothing says or acts otherwise, then they do go together. That is, they fall into a pattern that instantiates a prospective mode of ordering. On the other hand, if they can’t be made to go together—why then they simply don’t cohere (Law, 1994, p. 110).

So for a moment, I bring my writing to order and submit to the discipline of reporting the problem, purpose, limitations, originality, and outline for this project.

**Problem**

My dissertation is concerned with the familiar trope that many of the structures, methods, practices, and expectations of our educational institutions contribute to the prevalence of autonomous individualism (Callan, 1994; Carr, 2000; Cuypers, 1992; Dearden, 1972; Frank et al., 1995; Frank O. Ramirez, 2003). I highlight two main problems with the coupling of obligatory education and autonomous individualism: 1) the ways in which the autonomous individual becomes the automatic chooser in the context of consumer capitalism (Devine & Irwin, 2005; J. W. Meyer & Jepperson, 2009; Schinkel, de Ruyter, & Steutel, 2010; Schwalbe, 1993), and related, 2) the way in which autonomous individualism can end up being a form of Eurocentric neo-colonialism (Deyhle & LeCompte, 1994; Tyler et al., 2008; Vadeboncoeur, 1997; Walkerdine, 1993).

**Purpose**

I present my dissertation as part of the ongoing discourse of the purposes and practices of education. My dissertation points to the possibility of educators working toward “the full development of the human personality” (UDHR, 46, 2a) without
universalizing or privileging the “autonomous individual.” While the primary concern is
to re-frame what it is for educators to contribute to the development of the person, my
dissertation also serves to contribute to a “rich theoretical repertoire” (Heuts & Mol,
2013, p. 127) that would prove useful in expanding what it means to do educational
research. While theories of practice associated with praxis, habitus, and communities of
practice are not unknown in educational circles, the ecological approach I am
illuminating does not appear to be well taken up in North America. I also have found that
while attachment is part of popular psychology its implications for education are not
broadly understood (more on this in the fifth chapter). While I take up neo-institutional
research with some caution, its body of research into the coupling of rise of obligatory
education with emerging nineteenth century European nation-state deserves a second
look.

Limitations

I want to make clear some of the limits of my dissertation. While my dissertation
is critical of autonomous individualism, I am not arguing for collectivism over
individualism in education (see D. H. Hargreaves, 1980; Taylor, 2004). While my
dissertation advocates for consideration of students’ families, I am not speaking in terms
of the idealized family, including nineteenth century sentimental family or twentieth
century nuclear family. While my dissertation is interested in helping resist the “sense of
ourselves as self-centred, self-contained, individualistic subjectivities” that is “implicit in
most of what is taught in our academic disciplines” (Shotter, 1996, p. 4), it is not written
in resistance to compulsory mass education or even against autonomy as a necessary
skill. After all, as the younger Charles Taylor pointed out, “the growth of education and
of self-conscious choice which have occurred . . . are not only precious achievements, they are also irreversible developments” (1958, p. 11). Instead, I point to a socio-ecological practice perspective of the person and of education as a way of working towards the full development of the person that does not require autonomous individualism (see Kemmis, Wilkinson, & Edwards-Groves, 2014).

At the same time there are a number of truisms about education that I resist. If it is true, “the unexamined life is not worth living,” I would resist the assumption that formal or compulsory education is the only way to examine life (see Illich, 1971). I also resist both the optimism about education and the pessimism about the human condition in H. G. Well’s oft quoted statement, “Human history becomes more and more a race between education and catastrophe.” While I believe in the important role that education can play in transformation, I also agree with Niezen that, “the idea of a cosmopolitan intelligentsia possessing the only legitimate way to transcend the power interests in social knowledge is not an attractive solution to many of those who see themselves as oppressed colonial subjects” (2009, p. 4).

If power, pastoral or otherwise, cannot be eradicated in obligatory education, it must at least be administered with prudence. Part of that prudence requires that we work with accurate and helpful constructs of the person. By accurate, I mean things like: is empirically rigorous; will stand up to contestation (Rose, 1996, p. 55); and has strong explanatory and predictive capacity (Law, 1994, pp. 13–14). By helpful, I mean things like: can be translated into practices that ordinary people can participate in “without first having to learn a special or particular discipline or to meet standards or to pass exams set by those already acknowledged as experts” (Shotter, 1996, p. 6); and, in this case, can
contribute to an alternate future (Gergen, 1996, p. 14) where there is more fruitful harmonizing of the personal and social goals of compulsory public education (Martin & McLellan, 2013). As such my project is concerned with the empirical, but as a conceptual piece, it contains no original field work. Further, though the theories involved in the assemblage work with empirical data, I do not elaborate that data in my dissertation, pointing instead to the findings and conclusions of the pertinent researchers. Those who are looking for a full elaboration of the arguments behind what are sometimes contestable conclusions will have to follow up with the original sources.

Taking an organizational perspective of the development of the person, informed not only by Sroufe but also by practice theorists of organizational behaviour is developmental without being deterministic (Sroufe, Coffino, & Carlson, 2010a); realistic without being representational (Gherardi, 2009b); political without being positioned (Nicolini, 2013); and pluralist without being merely relativistic (Law, 2004a). As such, I will show a way that educationalists can work towards the full development of the human personality that includes the character and competencies required to work with and for others even as they resist the “sense of ourselves as self-centred, self-contained, individualistic subjectivities” that is “implicit in most of what is taught in our academic disciplines” (Shotter, 1996, p. 4).

I would understand that a workable theory of the person should be 1) empirically sensible while avoiding essentialism, 2) coherent with a broad range of rationalities, and 3) position the importance of education in developing persons while deconstructing education’s role in governmentality. That is, the model must be sustainable in the light of the different forces at work in education without sustaining oppressive ideologies and
other practices. Finally, to further a more transformative understanding of education, a helpful construct of the person will 4) help students to perform and persist, if not flourish, as they learn to navigate and negotiate between multiple levels of responsibility: to oneself, to one’s family and community of origin, to one’s fellow learners, and to the transcendent (however construed).17

**Originality**

In explaining the way that autonomous individualism, consumer capitalism, and neo-colonialism are so pervasive and persistent in late twentieth century obligatory education, I am drawing mainly on existing research and theorizing. One original contribution is in showing that Sroufe’s theory of the development of the person should be understood in the context of ecology of practices. Not only is this claim original, but the research approach I am taking is also original, in that I am showing how theories that deal with recurrent activity patterns can be understood as contributing to contemporary practice theories.

My dissertation is inter-disciplinary in scope, if not in approach, working with developmental psychology and both neo-institutional and organizational theories. While my overall stance is in line with a chastened critical theory, I am working within a more

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16By *ideology*, I mean a set of mainly discursive practices that prescribe sociomaterial relations between persons. It is common to deploy the term ideology in relation to a set of meanings and practices that legitimate the power of a dominant social group.

17I take up the term, *transcendent* in relation to Rorty’s observation, “intellectuals cannot live without pathos” (1992, p. 31). Here, pathos is the distance between what is present and the transcendent. Whether or not people have a responsibility to the transcendent, the educated do. The transcendent may be religious, or something like human flourishing, or focused on *gai* or even Roddenberry’s “to boldly go where no one has gone before.”
modest hermeneutic. This means that I am attempting to interpret texts respectfully as I acknowledge my own situatedness. The interpretive process involves reading carefully, writing reflexively, and waiting for a “fusion of horizons” between myself and the reading. In this approach, understanding takes shape in a kind of circular tension between the familiar and the strange, and the past and the future, with a view on grasping the deep assumptions of social life. The guiding principle here is the so-called ‘hermeneutical circle’; the parts of the text need to be related to the whole to gain meaning, but the whole only reveals itself through the parts (M. Simons, Olssen, & Peters, 2009, p. 70).

While my research is entirely derived from published materials, the materials I work with are themselves derived from ongoing empirical research. As noted, my dissertation includes reading two theoretical research projects through a practice lens. The two projects—Meyer’s World Society Theory (WST) and Sroufe’s representation of human development—involve extensive empirical research. When I speak of empirical, I am not speaking of merely quantitative research. Nor am I speaking as if the empirical is foundational to knowing. Nor should the empirical be equated with “the natural,” the experimental, or the irrefutable. Rather, when speaking of empirical research, I am speaking of research that deals with sensible, durable, material arrangements. However, the way that such arrangements are investigated and explored is subject to ongoing negotiation (see Jost & Kruglanski, 2002; Richters, 1997).

The practice approach to organizational studies is itself thoroughly empirical and employs a wide range of qualitative methodologies (Gherardi, 2012a; Nicolini, 2013; Shove, Pantzar, & Watson, 2012). These methodologies focus on what people are doing: “rather than asking what kinds of cognitive processes and conceptual structures are involved, researchers ask what kinds of social engagement and material setting provide
the proper context for knowing, working, learning and innovating (Brown and Duguid, 1991; 2001)” (Gherardi, 2015a, p. 177).

Besides the practice approach, I also explore education per the research of John Meyer and colleagues. Meyer is at the centre of theoretical research project (J. Berger, Willer, & Zelditch, 2005) known as World Society Theory.18 According to this model, new institutions and agents have replaced primordial corporations in defining and legitimizing the person. Grounded in quantitative methodologies but relying on a constructivist epistemology, the research project started as an attempt to account for the spread of mass education in the 19th and 20th centuries (J. W. Meyer, Ramirez, Rubinson, & Boli-Bennett, 1977; Francisco O. Ramirez & Boli, 1987). Meyer and his colleagues were able to document and describe the role of mass education in the development of a highly standardized “universalistic individualism” (Boli, Ramirez, & Meyer, 1985, p. 156). Meyer’s methodology and theorization was expanded to analyze areas such as the environment (Schofer & Hironaka, 2005), management (Gili S. Drori, Jang, & Meyer, 2006; J. Meyer, 2002; Sahlin-Andersson & Engwall, 2002), science (Schofer, Ramirez, & Meyer, 2000), human rights (Hafner-Burton, Tsutsui, & Meyer, 2008; Wotipka & Ramirez, 2008), law (Boyle & Meyer, 1998), and higher education (Frank & Meyer, 2007; Frank, Wong, Meyer, & Ramirez, 2000). Their analysis shows that prior to the mid-20th century European society was scripted largely by invested agents like family, family-units, religious groups, and governments. However, over the course of the 20th century new sets of agents have arisen to displace the primordial bodies in defining and legitimating the person. Further, the one of the main

18Not to be mistaken for Luhmann’s (1997) theory of World Society.
scripts for society assume the autonomous individual and are characterized by speaking to transcendent needs such as human rights, global security, and ecological health (Boli & Thomas, 1997; J. W. Meyer, 2000, 2007, 2010a; J. W. Meyer & Jepperson, 2009). Meyer’s WST helps as another way of understanding how the scripts for autonomous individualism and models like New Public Management have become so diffuse.

At the time of this writing, Jack Martin is a Professor of Psychology at Simon Fraser University and Ann-Marie McLellan was on faculty at Kwantlen Polytechnic University, teaching psychology and educational psychology. Martin has been writing about psychology in education and theoretical psychology since the mid-1980s. In the 1990s, Martin, with a number of colleagues, began to ask the question, “what kind of scholarship is psychology?” (see Hoshmand & Martin, 1994; Martin, 1996; Martin & Sugarman, 2000; Martin & Thompson, 1997). Troubled by the “unsustainable myths of” modernity and “some of the more excessively radical medicine of postmodernism” found in psychology and education, Martin and colleagues were asking, is it possible to imagine a scenario for human development and change that makes no "fixed" foundationalist or essentialist assumptions, yet which might be drawn on in a defense of limited forms of realism, subjectivity, and warranted understanding necessary to preserve some rationale for psychological and educational inquiry and practice (Martin & Sugarman, 2000, p. 399)?

For over a decade, Martin and colleagues proposed and experimented with different forms of scholarship: pragmatist (Hoshmand & Martin, 1994); hermenenutical (Martin & Sugarman, 2001; Martin & Thompson, 1997); societal-psychological constructionism (Martin & Sugarman, 1997); neo-Median perspectivalism (Martin, 2006a); and interactivist social ontology (Martin & Bickhard, 2012). Throughout Martin’s journey, practice played an important role. Early on it was noted, “it seems undeniable that, outside of certain biological constraints, we humans through our actions
and experiences are both products, and producers, of social and psychological practices 
(Martin & Thompson, 1997, p. 637). More recently, Martin (2010) states:

persons as psychological beings are not exhausted by either their undeniable 
biophysical nature or their equally undeniable sociocultural constitution. There is 
nothing fictitious about our biophysical constituents and determinants, nor is there 
anything illusory about our cultural artifacts and social practices. Both contribute 
substantively to our psychological being (p. 221).

McLellan was one of Martin’s students at SFU and did her PhD dissertation on 
“The educated self: Psychology's contribution to the education of children in twentieth-
century North America.” Her dissertation concluded that,

Individuals, including children and adolescents in schools, now control 
themselves through practices of self-evaluation, self-scrutiny and self-regulation 
derived from psychological inquiry and promoted through psycho-educational 
interventions. . . The autonomous self that is able, through psychological 
technologies that have spread in all facets of contemporary life, to act upon itself 
in order to achieve happiness and self-fulfillment is firmly tied to an ethic of 
individuality. . . Although this self may work to a limited degree to enhance 
individuals’ academic achievement and academic ambitions, it is inadequate for 

Martin and McLellan have collaborated together on several articles critical of 
disciplinary psychology in education (Martin & McLellan, 2008; A.-M. McLellan & 
Martin, 2005). In their (2013) book, The Education of Selves, they focus on the “research 
and intervention practices of educational psychologists in the areas of self-esteem/self-
concept and self-regulation/self-efficacy” (2013, p. 59). They conclude that 
psychoeducation produces a “hybrid managerial-expressive self” that is “ultimately 
unable to integrate personal and societal demands of schooling with respect to the 
formation of selves as communal agents” (2013, p. 58).

Sroufe’s organizational perspective on human development is rigorously 
empirical. Though his field is developmental psychology, he is not plagued by the 
problems so often noted in clinical or experimental psychology (Jost & Kruglanski, 2002;
Richters, 1997) but instead grounds his theorizing in rigorous observation in the context of longitudinal studies rather than in experimentation in laboratories. From the organizational perspective of human development, people are organized around attachment, which “is an integrative construct: it lies at the intersection of all of the cognitive, emotional, and social development occurring in the first year” (Sroufe et al., 2005, p. 42). Moreover, the attachment relationship that children experience as infants evolves into more complex attachment like relationships with siblings, peers, and other adults—including teachers (Bergin & Bergin, 2009). The experience of attachment has at least indirect influence on romantic relationships and shapes the way adults practice care and concern for their own children (Fraley, 2002). Consequently, Grossman and Grossman (2005) argue that “attachment is not an option with which culture can freely ‘play’” (p. 208). This means that even if education directed towards autonomous individualism was not associated with compulsive consumerism and neo-colonialism, it would be still problematic for educators to work toward full development of the person as autonomous individual without taking the attachment relationship into perspective.

Outline

In the next two chapters I elaborate on the practice perspective emerging in the social sciences. I invoke an ontology that understands that practices are the smallest and prior unit of social analysis (Bueger, 2013) and are keystone to the formation and perpetuation of social structures (Nicolini, 2013). Such an ontology means: 1) that everyday practices are consequential in producing both the person and the social; and 2) that practices are mutually constituted with actors, other practices, and the material as a complex assemblage of non-dualistic arrangements (Feldman & Orlikowski, 2011). The
second chapter includes a basic chronology of theories of practice and brief survey of the way theories of practice have been taken up in education. In the third chapter I expand on this account as I show what it is to take a socio-ecological approach to practices.

In the fourth chapter I explain the coupling of autonomous individualism with obligatory education, consumer capitalism, and neo-colonialism. This work is mostly rehearsing established material from the Stanford Group and from critical histories of education and the psy-complex. As well, it is supplemented by some of my own original research into early education promoters. The fifth chapter will present the core elements of Sroufe’s organizational perspective on the development of the person. Then I will show why the organizational perspective should be taken as a theory of practice and highlight some differences that would make for educators’ understanding of the human personality. In the concluding chapter I revisit a research site that has taken a more ecological approach to practice in education. Kemmis et al. (2014) have developed a fairly elaborate research program on site based educational development that based on their work in several Catholic primary schools in Australia. Their work can be taken as a model for others who would take an ecologies of practices approach to teaching and learning in obligatory education.
CHAPTER TWO: PRACTICE AS THEORY

My overall concern is to show that there are ways for educators to take up “the full development of the human personality” (UDHR, 1948, 26.2a) without contributing to the imbalance of personal over social goals. I do this by elaborating a practice approach to organization and development that permits educators to re-frame the full development of the person in ways that do not entail the autonomous individual. Such an approach is ecological in nature and can be understood in light of the twenty-first century re-turn to practice. In this chapter I introduce and elaborate on twenty-first century practice theorizing as method. My dissertation both commends a practice approach to development of the student and also takes a practice approach to reading existing theoretical research projects.

In the following two chapters I develop an ecologies of practices approach informed mainly by Sylvia Gherardi. Gherardi and her colleagues turned to practice in order to give an account of learning organizations, organizational learning, and the knowledge economy (Gherardi, 2001, 2004a; Gherardi & Nicolini, 2005). They were especially concerned with resolving the prevalent “dichotomies of mind-body, thought-action, individual-organization” that associated knowledge acquisition with pictures “of ingestion or of capitalization (banking) with all their correlates” (Gherardi, 2000, p. 212; see also hooks, 1994). Gherardi and colleagues resisted the reductionism found in much of the “knowledge management approach, which treats knowledge as practically
synonymous with information created, disseminated and embedded in products, service, and systems” (Gherardi, 2000, p. 213).

At the beginning of her turn to practice, much of Gherardi’s work was introducing, compiling and explaining existing research in the sociology of knowledge (see Gherardi, 1999, 2001; Gherardi & Nicolini, 2001; Gherardi, Nicolini, & Odella, 1998). Over the ensuing decade she started to develop her own original contribution to practice-based studies of organizational learning and knowing. Although not always accessible, her theorizing is insightful and generative; and is another important contribution to sociomaterial perspectives on organizing, knowing, and practice. It is the concern for organization and learning that makes Gherardi an important interlocutor in my dissertation, even though her focus has been on formal organizations and on workplace and other forms of adult learning rather than obligatory education.

Besides from Gherardi, my work is also funded by the research and theorizing of Davide Nicolini and Andreas Reckwitz. Nicolini has navigated the practice turn with Gherardi and they were frequent co-contributors, especially in the first five years of the new millenium. Nicolini’s (2013) introduction to Practice Theory, Work, and Organization is a capstone on twenty-first century practice theory and method. Reckwitz is a cultural historian who writes mostly in German, but has translated a number of seminal articles that differentiate paradigmatic practice theories from other late twentieth century cultural theories associated with post- and high- modernisms (see Reckwitz, 2002a, 2002b).

In Toward a Theory of Social Practices (2002b) Reckwitz situates the practice turn in relation to other social and cultural theories. Fully formed, the practice turn
provides an alternative to early modern social theories that understand the social to be explained as either individual contestation (*Homo economicus*) or as a set of material rules whether imposed, constructed, or elaborated (*Homo sociologicus*) (see Archer, 2000). It also provides an alternate to the high-modern cultural theories that reduce the social to human (objective or subjective) mental activity (mentalism), or equates the social with the inscribing and interpretation of texts on the material world (semiotics and other textualisms). It is not that practice theory regards each of these as inconsequential but rather treats each of these (mental activity, inscribing and interpreting texts, discourses, and intersubjective spaces) as kinds of or elements of practice (Pickering, 1995; Reckwitz, 2002b; Rouse, 2007). This results in a different understanding of and appreciation for agency. Building on Reckwitz; distinctions, Nicolini (2013) states, practice theories carve a specific space for individual agency and agents. While *homo economicus* is conceived as a (semi) rational decision maker and *homo sociologicus* is depicted as a norm-following, role-performing individual, *homo practicus* is conceived as a carrier of practices, a body/mind who ‘carries’, but also ‘carries out’, social practices (Reckwitz 2002, p. 256) (p. 4).

In what follows, I introduce the practice turn and elaborate on it using several taxonomies. Then I do a brief review of the way theories of practice have been taken up in education.

**The Practice Turn**

Over the course of late twentieth century, theories of practice and practice-based studies co-emerged in a number of social science disciplines and in multiple other

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19At the time, Reckwitz understood practice theory and Habermas’ intersubjectivism to be distinct. In the interim he has come to see that this distinction is unhelpful (Bueger & Gadinger, 2015, p. 451 fn 1).
research sites. Fed by several philosophical and theoretical streams, there is no grand theory or master narrative of practice (see Nicolini, 2013). However, there is a common project: an attention to practices as a main matter-of-concern, especially when exploring the relation between social continuity and change. This attention includes a concern for the arrangement of the elements that make up practice and what the arrangements accomplish in a particular place and time. Kuutti (2013) points out that:

Seeing social life as consisting of practices that have to be studied as wholes is a radical ontological commitment, leading to a complication and restructuring of the whole research process. But it also seems to offer a wide potential for better explanations, and opening a possibility to alleviate many of the dichotomies that have been plaguing social sciences (p. 41).

Practice-based studies are not just theoretical. They can also be a highly philosophical (Schatzki, 2002) or an intensely practical focus on routinized activity or situated action (see Feldman & Orlikowski, 2011; Norros, Savioja, & Koskinen, 2015). Sometimes considered a bandwagon effect (Corradi, Gherardi, & Verzelloni, 2010), most who take the practice turn at the philosophical and theoretical level share, along with other “post-semiotic” theories,

a common epistemological presumption that there exists a recursive relationship of actors with a given and always historically determined cultural order, as well as that these two ontological domains [actors and cultural order] are somehow mediated in the process of their mutual and dialogical (re)production (Blažević, 2011, pp. 55–56).

Though there have been many turns to practice in Anglo-European thought, the twenty-first century re-turn to practice has several important distinctions. First, while the twenty-first century re-turn to practice has predecessors—Aristotle, Marx, Foucault, Butler, Bourdieu, Giddens, Wittgenstein, Heidegger—it has no provenance. As a whole, the twenty-first century re-turn to practice belongs to no particular field or politic and its approach to predecessors is more hermeneutical than eclectic. While certain disciplines
and authors may situate themselves in line with a previous canonical theorist, many others who take the practice approach borrow insights from multiple disciplines without concern for maintaining theoretical integrity (Shove et al., 2012).

A second and related distinction is that with the re-turn to practice, “the concept of practice [moved] from a supporting to a leading role” (Bueger & Gadinger, 2015, p. 2; see also Reckwitz, 2002a; Schatzki, 2002). Practice becomes the central and prior unit of analysis. The other indispensable elements—actors, structures, artefacts, affects, knowledge, structures, organizing telos—are produced in/by/through/for practice. All of the elements in a practice arrangement, including practices, are intra-acting, changing and being changed.

This leads to a third distinction. In her report on theoretical trends in anthropology, Sherry Ortner (1984) noticed that anthropologists who were influenced both by social constructionism (P. L. Berger & Luckmann, 1967) and by Marxism shared three significant assumptions: “that society is a system, that the system is powerfully constraining, and yet that the system can be made and unmade through human action and interaction” (1984, p. 159). However, most of the models captured in Ortner’s summary associated practice with structure, continuity, and constraint and were unable to give full

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20 Tirens is the overarching aim, purpose, or explanation given to a practice-arrangement. Kemmis et al. (2014), rifting on Aristotle and drawing on Habermas, have identified four common educational teloi: 1) theoretical (concerned for truth); 2) technical (concerned for getting something done or produced); 3) practical (concerned for right living); 4) critical-emancipatory (resisting and overcoming irrationality and injustice). The practice perspective sensitizes us to the affective side to telos (Schatzki, 2003).
account to the role of practice in change and innovation. In contrast, twenty-first century practice theorizing tends to see both continuity and change as an accomplishment of practice.

As already indicated, one of the features of twenty-first century practice theorizing is the awareness and even appreciation that there is no grand theory of practice; instead there are many practice theories. As a consequence, twenty-first century practice theorizing employs various metaphors and taxonomies of practice (see Corradi et al., 2010; Fenwick, 2003; Hager, 2012; T. Hargreaves, 2011; Kemmis, McTaggart, & Nixon, 2014a; Nicolini, 2013). I will elaborate three taxonomies: 1) five historical waves of theorizing practice; 2) three approaches or stances while doing practice research; and 3) a toolkit approach to site based research of practice. A reminder that these lists are arbitrary; they are temporary manifestations that function as long as they are not taken too seriously (Law, 1994, p. 110).

**Five Waves**

The notion of waves of practice theory is borrowed from Ortner (1996) who points to two main waves in practice theorizing. However, I agree with Springs (2008) that,

Ortner may inadvertently overlook the capacities of certain versions of practice theory to address issues of power by compartmentalizing her account into dual categories of “first” vs. “second wave,” “resistance” vs. “non-resistance,” and

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21 In the practice approach, *innovation* can be understood as a generic practice or as an organizational or personal goal. Gherardi (2012b) focuses on innovation “in processual, incremental and continuous terms . . . so that innovation is conceptualized as neither separate nor separable from learning, working and organizing” (p. 128).
limiting her account of practice theory’s emergence to the influences of Weber, Marx, and Bourdieu (p. 946).

In what follows, I give a very brief account of each of the waves.

The first wave\textsuperscript{22} of practice theories is associated with Marx’s focus on praxis and the American Pragmatists’ focus on practical reasoning. The focus on practice and the practical can be understood as a recovery of practice in reaction to Platonic-Cartesian idealism. For first wave theorists, practice is a major plank in their (mostly political) programs. They take up praxis or practical reasoning as one of the main ways to leverage “change by means of intervention and social experimentation” (Miettinen, Paavola, & Pohjola, 2012, p. 356). Marx and pragmatists like Dewey would be familiar figures in educational circles, but their concern for practice is often a secondary feature (see Miettinen, 2006).

The second wave of practice theories are concerned largely with explaining how systems or structure are produced (Springs, 2008, p. 945). Authors like Giddens and Bourdieu—coining terms like structuration and habitus—portray human agency as embedded in practice that are “habitual, repetitive and taken for granted” (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 963). However, even though late twentieth century American sociology was heavily influenced by Bourdieu and Giddens, they and many of the second wave

\textsuperscript{22}Schmidt (2014) points to an early turn to practice in the seventeenth century which, culminated in the large-scale project launched by the French Academy of Science in 1675, undertaken at the government’s request and with the express purpose of producing systematic descriptions of the work practices and techniques of the about 200 crafts and trades (‘arts et métiers’) then in existence in France, from bakeries to pin manufactures (p. 431). This project was eclipsed by the industrial revolution.
theorists were embedded in disciplinary practices that made it hard to foreground practices and,

when practices remain ontologically subordinate to actors and are thus construed as ‘activities of’ organizational agents, it is not a move far from the traditional ways of thinking from which theories such as Giddens’ were trying to distance themselves. It is only when the basic locus of analysis switches from the individual to the social practice itself that a significant rupture is produced (Nicolini, 2013, p. 52).

Foucault, Butler, and Ortner herself would be exemplars of third wave practice theorists.²³ Third wave theorists are overtly political, focusing on practice for the “primary purposes of critique and resistance” of “power and domination” (Springs, 2008, p. 946). As such, third wave theorists tend to regard practices as belonging to discursive arrangements (see Reckwitz, 2002a).

The first three waves theorize practice in relation to other matters of concern—capital, education, structure, resistance; with the fourth wave, practice becomes the program. This could be construed as a move from theories of practice to practice theories. Exemplars of the fourth wave include Schatzki, Gherardi, and Reckwitz. Their concern shifts from praxis, structuration, habitus, and discursive practice to situated actions or “what people do together” (Hopwood, 2016, p. 80). In the fourth wave, doings are considered significant without being rendered as forms of saying; sayings, then are regarded as particular kinds of doing. Further, fourth wave practice theories explore the way that practice produces both continuity and change.

The fourth wave is influenced not just by the previous three waves, but also by fields like studies in the sociology of science (see Latour & Woolgar, 1986; Pickering,

²³Ortner’s first and second wave correspond to the second and third wave outlined here.
1992; Rouse, 2007) and organizational theory and research (see Knorr-Cetina & Bruegger, 2002; Miettinen, Samra-Fredericks, & Yanow, 2009; Tsoukas, 2003; Whittington, 2004). Two main impetuses to fourth wave theorizing have been noted: 1) discontent with enlightenment project (see Miettinen et al., 2012), and 2) response to significant rapid changes in “technology” including the technology of modern organization (see Feldman & Orlikowski, 2011; Fenech & Dovey, 2005). Together they share a concern for the way persons, peoples, and technologies develop from and are organized around practices (see S. R. Clegg, Kornberger, & Rhodes, 2005; Whittington, 2011).

Since practice is the program, there is ongoing discussion, exploration, and negotiation as to what is meant by practice. This is in part related to an enactment, not always explicit, of Wittgenstein’s notion of language games. Early Heidegger and later Wittgenstein could be considered as philosophical predecessors for fourth wave practice theories as long as it is remembered that they fund fourth wave theorizing and are not the founders of it. That being said, Dreyfus (2000) and Rouse (2000) position themselves as Heideggerian philosophers. Schatzki’s early work was indebted to Heidegger, and to Wittgenstein even more so (Schatzki, 1996). Schatzki is one of the most important philosophers for the last two waves of practice theories. Other important voices, not already mentioned, that contribute to twenty-first century practice theorizing include Charles Taylor (1989), Alasdair MacIntyre (1981), and to a lesser extent Stephen Toulmin (2001). Both MacIntyre and Toulmin are themselves indebted to (a rehabilitated) Aristotle. One of Taylor’s major contributions has been to explain how
social imaginaries, especially *modern* ones, render theory as practice (Taylor, 2004; see also Hodge & Parker, 2017).

Fifth wave practice theorizing emerges from fourth wave and is exemplified by scholars like Corrardi, Nicolini, Kemmis, Wilkinson, Hopwood, Shove, and Watson. Fifth wave is distinguished from fourth wave in two main ways. First, the fifth wave is more conscious of the previous waves of practice theorizing. This means that it is invested in producing taxonomies of practice that incorporate various earlier theories of practice (see Corradi et al., 2010; Fenwick, 2003; Hager, 2012; T. Hargreaves, 2011; Kemmis, McTaggart, et al., 2014a; Nicolini, 2013). Second, we see a conscious attempt to instrumentalize fourth wave practice theories for more than their descriptive value (see Hopwood, 2015a; Kemmis, Wilkinson, et al., 2014; Nicolini, 2013; Plessz & Gojard, 2015). That is, fifth wave theorists are asking, “How can we use practice theory to effect desired change?” The fourth and the fifth wave overlap in time: one beginning at the close of the twentieth century and the other starting to take shape in the last decade.\(^\text{24}\)

A further distinction may be made between fourth and fifth wave theorists and that is the place of post-humanism. While post-humanism is latent in some fourth wave theorizing, it becomes one of the more important distinctions among many fifth wave theorists. Those who take up post-humanism usually rely on notions of actor network theory (ANT)—especially as practiced by Latour (2005); and of sociomateriality—

\(^{24}\)The distinction I am making between fourth and fifth wave may be superfluous in the end, but comprehensive projects like Kemmis et al. (2014), Hopwood (2015a), and Norros et al. (2015) are absent much before 2010. Instead we see broad theorizing (Gherardi, 2000; Schatzki, Knorr-Cetina, & Savigny, 2001) and highly situated research projects (Gherardi, 2004b; Nicolini, 2009a).
especially as elaborated by Barad (2007) and Haraway (2013). On the other hand, Shove et al. (2012) acknowledge the influence of Latour and science and technology studies, but “do not go along with the idea (common in STS) that materials constitute the sticky anchor weights of social action or that they should be treated as immutable and relatively incorruptible transporters of power and influence” (p. 10). Site based educational development from Australia is another example of fifth wave practice theorizing that is inherently humanist in its orientation (See Wilkinson & Kemmis, 2015).

Though the five waves follow a kind of chronology, the appearance of one wave does not mean the disappearance of the preceding wave, nor should the movement from first through fifth waves be seen as a matter of progress or paradigm shifts. Further there are important stories happening in the “troughs.” For instance, I would situate Lave & Wenger’s work on legitimate peripheral participation between the third and fourth waves. It is critiqued on the one hand for being unconcerned with power and discourse (Engeström, Hughes, Jewson, & Unwin, 2007) and therefore doesn’t belong in the third wave. It doesn’t belong to the fourth wave, because it is focused on community more than on practice (see Nicolini, 2013; more on Lave & Wenger later in the chapter).

Organizational Perspective on Theorizing Practice

Feldman and Orlikowski (2011) have identified three ways of studying practice: an empirical focus on how people act in organizational contexts; a theoretical focus on understanding relations between the actions people take and the structures of social life; and a philosophical focus on the constitutive role of practices in producing social reality (p. 2).

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25John Law (2009) is an example of researcher who funds fourth wave theorist and who has enacted both ANT and sociomateriality or material semiotics.
Simply put, the empirical focus regards practices as things; the theoretical focus regards practices as processes; and the philosophical focus regards practice as the way to resolve many of the irreducible dualisms of euro-modernity.

The *empirical* focus attends to what people are doing and what that doing accomplishes in relation to the immediate context. There are basically three ways that the empirical focus is enacted. First, as *weak programme* (Bloor, 1976) where researchers are using practice pragmatically and have no commitment to a theoretical or philosophical approach to practice. Researchers employ practice research as a kind of qualitative method in order to examine the strategic planning or marketing (see Baxter & Chua, 2008; Skålén & Hackley, 2011). Second, as a philosophical commitment to *material-semiotics* that as a matter of discipline focuses on the empirical (Law, 2004a). Third, as part of a field of research where empirical problems have led researchers (especially those dealing with technological advances) to take up practice theory as *strong programme* even as their focus is quite particular and empirical.

Many fourth and fifth wave theorists have taken this journey. Orlikowski relates: “I became intrigued by practice theory through my interests in understanding technology in the workplace” after discovering that “dominant models of technology” failed to acknowledge “that technology is not valuable, meaningful, or consequential by itself; it only becomes so when people actually engage with it in practice” (Feldman & Orlikowski, 2011, p. 13). Lenna Norros is another example of a researcher whose empirical focus has led her to strong programme practice theory. Concerned mainly with safety-critical systems, Norros has been researching human factors/ergonomics since the mid-1980s. In the last decade she and her colleagues have turned to practice theory in
order to help “develop good interplay with engineering and other relevant design-oriented disciplines” (Norros et al., 2015, pp. 18–19).

They report:

Adopting the concept of practice has implications with regard to the vocabulary and methods associated with human conduct. An earlier work (Norros, 2004) was our first attempt in this direction. In that book, we proposed the use of the practice concept and introduced the Core-Task Analysis approach for the study of complex work. At that time, the possibility of connecting the developing approach to a distinct practice-theory perspective had not yet been identified. Instead, the approach was labeled ecological. . . . This orientation is still valid. However, as our concrete research tasks have become more and more connected to design, it has been necessary to develop an understanding of the role of human factors from the design perspective. We have drawn especially from those streams of practice theory that are concerned with the development of practice (Norros et al., 2015, pp. 18–19).

While the empirical focus attends to situations, the theoretical focus attends to research fields and presents as a distinct school of thought in various human sciences including human geography (see Birtchnell, 2012); history (see Spiegel, 2005); and organizational studies (see Corradi et al., 2010). Those who take a theoretical focus tend to take up the concerns of second wave theorists especially around structuring and agency with the assumption that, “human action and social order emerge, and attain meaning and intelligibility, from social practices” (Sandberg & Dall’Alba, 2009, p. 1352). Theoretical approaches to practice are concerned as much with where practices are coming from as with their accomplishments. This permits researchers to “engage with social complexity on its own terms” (Antonacopoulou, 2015, p. 4).

Currently, practice theories taking a philosophical focus engage two main questions: ontology and epistemology. From an ontological perspective, practices don’t just produce social structures; they are the keystone to understanding how social reality is produced. From an epistemological perspective, practices are critical to understanding
human knowing. Gherardi’s interest in practice started as theoretical and over the decades has become more philosophical. One of the main contributors to a philosophical focus is Schatzki. His work is thoroughly philosophical and he has engaged not only questions of ontology and epistemology but has also done significant work on the relation between practice and time (Schatzki, 2006b). As a cultural historian, Reckwitz has also made major contributions to a philosophical perspective.

Taking a philosophical perspective often involves a reconstructing of common distinctions in sociology; not only agency and structure but also micro- and macro-. The difference between micro- and macro- are not in the practices-arrangements under study but instead are a part of ongoing ways of practicing theory. Discrete, situated, social practices are connected to but not contained by larger practice patterns which are themselves connected with patterns of various sizes—doings and sayings, tasks, projects, and institutions (see Schatzki, 2012). Any distinctive patterns ordering that can be distinguished as micro- or macro- are temporary and contingent. Gherardi’s ecology of practices approach takes up ontology and epistemology but without the same kind of philosophical rigor as Schatzki. This is in part because her field doesn’t demand the same kind of philosophic precision, but even more, because “a gender sub-text too is at work to define what counts as knowledge.” Gherardi’s philosophical work is embodied, textured, and multi-sensorial rather than approximating “objective, decontextualized truth” (Gherardi, 2000, p. 220). For Gherardi, knowledge is knowing-in-practice; it “is produced
through participation in a set of practices” (2012b, p. 219) and practice always entails learning and innovating.26

Nicolini’s Toolkit Approach

Another important taxonomy of practice theories is Nicolini’s (2013) outline of six different ways of theorizing and researching practice. His taxonomy is especially helpful because he provides a rolling case study showing what each of the theories might look like as a research practice. For Nicolini, “practice theories are fundamentally ontological projects in the sense that they attempt to provide a new vocabulary to describe the world and to populate the world with specific ‘units of analysis’; that is practices” (p. 9). However, he is not providing a synthesis of practice theories; rather he provides a toolkit approach “to exploit their similarities and differences” (p. 215). The practice approaches that he outlines share “a number of family resemblances”; they are “related, in some partial ways” but they have no “common feature” other than a concern for or capacity to get at social practices (p. 214). I give a brief over-view of each of the approaches to practice that he outlines and then introduce his overarching methodology: zooming in and zooming out.

The first approach that Nicolini elaborates is associated with cultural anthropology and with second wave theorists like Bourdieu and Giddens. Its research method, praxeology, includes a concern for bodily practice and is useful for interrogating the process of legitimation and stabilization. The second approach permits researchers to

26In practice-based-studies, learning shows up in multiple ways: as in developing a skill (practice as learning); as empirical object, like learning in a classroom (learning as situated practice); as generic idealized process (life-long learning); and as part of practice (learning in doing).
interrogate not only legitimation and stabilization, but also the tension between creativity and normativity. Exemplars include Lave & Wenger and MacIntyre who focus on the relation between practice and tradition and community. Its objects of concern include tools, artefacts, and the mediation between novices and masters.

The third and fourth approaches are established research methods that are not usually construed as practice theories. Nonetheless, Nicolini argues that both cultural historical activity theory (CHAT) and ethnomethodology (EM) are useful for doing practice research. CHAT is a neo-Marxist theory, heavily influenced by Vygotskii (1978) but developed and promoted by Engeström (2000). CHAT provides a highly formal way to analyse work activity as intra-actional ordering and the contradictions between “collective interests” and the “asymmetries and inequalities re/produced in the process” (Nicolini, 2013, fig. 9.1). EM is more a set of tools, or better still a set of sensibilities, that “treat practical activities, practical circumstances, and practical sociological reasoning as topics of empirical studies” (Garfinkel, 1967, p. 1). EM is oriented more to methodology than to theoretical explanations and focusses on articulating the situated accomplishments of practices including the accountability of practitioners to their practices.

The fifth approach, practice ontology, is associated with fourth wave practice theories especially as elaborated by Schatzki and associated with early Heidegger and later Wittgenstein. Its main focus is on sayings and doings and how they produce and organize “the house of the social” (Nicolini, 2013, p. 162). Since practices are at the nexus of bundles of socio-material-practice arrangements, there is nothing—including time—that is outside the scope of practice ontology. However, this also means that there
is no rigorous method associated with such a theoretical approach; but their approach is more heuristic than merely eclectic. It is practice ontologists who are most likely to appreciate Nicolini’s tool-kit approach.

The sixth stream, *discourse analysis*, focuses on conversation and discursive practices. There are several threads including *conversational analysis* (CA); *mediated discourse analysis* (MDA) and *critical discourse analysis* (CDA). CDA is connected with Foucaultian analysis and can be seen as part of third wave practice theories. Nicolini finds the breadth and political interests of CDA to be an improvement over CA’s narrow methodology. However, he resists CDA when it reduces doings to their discursive elements and questions along with Engeström (1999) whether CDA is equipped to “explain the middle ground of social-situated activity” (Nicolini, 2013, p. 202). MDA tries to resolve this difficulty but is largely incomplete as a methodology. Practice theorists, focussing on conversation, can employ any of the three tools: CA, CDA, or MDA but CA and CDA are quite loaded and twenty-first century practice theorists committed to practice ontology may find it hard to take up the tools with their alternative ontologies.

Nicolini’s interest in presenting these different approaches to practice research is to show the different ways researchers can *zoom in* and *zoom out* on practices (see Nicolini, 2009c, 2013). First, researchers zoom in to understand and re-present situated practices, detecting and elaborating on the details of actual sayings and doings. Then researchers zoom out to articulate the way those practices organize and are organized by ordering “across space and time” (Nicolini, 2009c, p. 1392). Together, these processes make for a poetic science that is more articulative than eliminative and provides
researcher with an eco-logic to explore the “gigantic, intricate, and evolving texture of dependencies and references” (Nicolini, 2013, p. 229). Nicolini’s toolkit approach helps us to understand both the complexity of practice and to appreciate the wide range of opportunities for doing practice-based studies of work, including the work of teaching and learning.

**Practice Grammar**

There are a number of grammatical tools for attending to practices. Two relatively simple ones: 1) pay attention to words with re-prefix, and 2) pay attention to the doings behind things.实践理论家学习到用动词或动名词来替换名词来帮助让实践显而易见（见Bjørkeng, Clegg, & Pitsis, 2009; Gherardi, 2016）。在英语中，我们倾向于把实践安排看作是固定的对象，但是采取实践视角允许我们看到在结构的建立或在次序的建立中所发生的事情（Law, 1994）。一个地方很容易看到的是re-前缀。几乎所有的re-前缀词都是实践或指向实践：re-hearsal指向re-hearsing，re-newal指向re-newing，等等。城市re-newal不是一个对象，而是一套实践安排指向re-newing的实践生态。

Practice approaches are fundamentally processual and tend to see the world as an ongoing routinized and recurrent accomplishment. This applies even to the most durable aspect of social life—what scholars call social structures. Family, authority, institutions, and organizations are all kept in existence through the recurrent performance of material activities, and to a large extent they only exist as long as those activities are performed (Nicolini, 2013, p. 3).

So too for the epistemic objects that recur throughout my dissertation. Terms like autonomous individualism, colonialism, and capitalism do not refer to things that exist as long as those activities are performed (Nicolini, 2013, p. 3).

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27Latour’s (1999) work with middle-voice and attachment points to another useful grammatical tool that is more difficult to employ (see Benveniste, 1971).
independent of their sociomaterial performance. Colonialism is not something that is waiting to happen, but rather is a term that we give to a set of practice-arrangements and their accomplishments. True, we often speak of terms with -ism suffix as ideology, but ideology is itself a way of describing things and not a cause. Ideology is a set of mainly discursive practices that shape asymmetric sociomaterial relations. It is common, but not necessary, to use ideology in reference to a set of meanings and practice that legitimate the power of the dominant social group.

The study of knowing-in-practice prefers action verbs able to transmit the idea of an emergent reality, of knowledge as a material activity. Numerous studies use terms and expressions connected to material artifacts: sociality is related not only to human beings, but also to symbolic and cultural artifacts. The debate on practice is rich in terms linked with the space-time location of the ‘doing’ of actors, that is, with the ‘situatedness’ of practices. Finally, the debate is characterized by the use of words that denote uncertainty, conflict and incoherence, understood as features intrinsic to practices because they produce innovation, learning and change (Corradi et al., 2008, p. 17).

**Practice and Education**

The demotion of practice is a constant characteristic of Western thought and it is for this reason that a focus on practice is still potentially subversive and innovative (Nicolini, 2013, p. 23).

On the whole, twenty-first century re-turn to practice is only starting to emerge in mass education, notably in contexts like site based educational development (Kemmis, Wilkinson, et al., 2014). Otherwise, education tends to take up practice concerns through the overall notion of praxis, Bourdieu’s notions of habitus and capital, communities of practice, and indirectly in notions of power and performativity. American pragmatist and educational philosopher, John Dewey, has had lasting influence on educational theory

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28I refer the reader to Michael A. Peter’s (2003) for a promising but un-developed essay on “Theorising Educational Practices: The Politico-Ethical Choices.”
and practice especially around notions of child-centred education and education for
democracy; however, Dewey’s theory of practice has only residual and disputed impact
on twenty-first century practice theories (see Glassman, 2001; Prawat, 2002; Glassman,
2004).

Theories of Praxis

Often, when we speak of praxis we are speaking of the active connection of
theory or critical reflection with action. Broadly speaking, praxis is purposefully working
towards the internal goods of a profession (see Dunne & Hogan, 2004; Green, 2015;
Hager, 2012; MacIntyre, 1981). From the inside, praxis is regarded as a professional skill
that teachers are responsible to develop and employ. This usage is especially common in
those who take up critical pedagogy (see Freire, 1981; Kohli, 1995; Kincheloe, 2008;
Jones, 2013). From the outside, praxis is a unit of analysis for exploring theories-in-
action. For instance, Kemmis (2012a), who has critical sensibilities, uses the term praxis
to refer to pedagogical practices that are informed by ongoing reflection. This neo-
Aristotelian perspective implies that any of the various competing pedagogical
positions—neoclassical, progressive, critical—that directs educators and students in
acting on a “view of what good life and good society is” should be considered as having a
praxis (p. 87).

For twenty-first century practice theorists with more inclusive understandings of
practice, the practice-praxis distinction is unnecessary. While practice researchers attempt
to elaborate on and articulate practices, it is rarely done so in the interests of praxis,
whether in Marxist or Aristotelian terms. If practices are the smallest and prior unit of
social analysis, then this applies to theory as well. Stompka (1994) argues the division of
the social into static and dynamic (see Comte & Harrison, 1911) was the “original sin” of the social sciences. Enlightenment thought associated the dynamic with theory and static with practice. In one sense Marx reversed this, associating praxis with the dynamic and ideology with the static. Twenty-first century practice theorists reject the static-dynamic binary altogether, and tend to treat theorizing practice and practicing theory more symmetrically.

Theory is not something that precedes thought, it is an accomplishment of theorizing. This is hardly in dispute. When analysis engages theorizing as practice, the question of whether to privilege theory or practice becomes mute. Further, theorizing, like any other practice, can be studied in terms of its accomplishments and arrangements. True, theorizing requires special arrangements and has unique accomplishments, but this is no different from other practice fields like the trades or agriculture. From the practice perspective, theorizing and intellectual work is different from but not superior to practice-arrangements like carpentry or cooking. Thus, the question of theory over practice or practice over theory becomes irrelevant as practice theory brings intellectual practice-work down to earth. This does not mean though that theorizing should deal only in the common-sense or that anyone can do it. The training, tools, and leisure required for theorizing are not widely distributed. What is more, intellectual practice-work takes place largely within a practice community that regulates its members and the work they do (see Taylor, 2004).

Bourdieu

Bourdieu is an important resource in turning to practice and an exemplar of a certain approach to practice research. His theories of habitus and capital are taken up and
have been especially useful in critiquing meritocracy and other cultural practices that sustain neo-liberalism (see Bourdieu, 1990; Mills, 2008). Bourdieu was influential in my own turn to practice and his grammar is found throughout my work. However, as Nicolini (2013) and others (see Mills, 2008; Zanten, 2005) point out, Bourdieu’s contribution to educational policy and practice is significant but ambiguous since his work is more helpful in understanding the durability of practice than it is in helping us effect change using a practice approach.

Communities of Practice

Communities of practice (COP) emerged as a cog in situated learning theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991). While the original focus was on workplace learning, it has found a broad place in contemporary education (Engeström et al., 2007). However, COP is inherently conservative and is unable to account for discontinuous innovation or make space for the kind of critical approach to praxis called for by Freire and other critical pedagogues (Fox, 2000; Roberts, 2006). While COP was theorized as emergent, some neo-liberal and neo-conservative managers have used the notion of COP to re-organize teachers as self-regulating and instrumentalised cadres (See Amin & Roberts, 2008; Cox, 2005; Gherardi, 2009a). As stated earlier, while COP has a critical place in the re-turn to practice, it is more helpful to speak of “practices of communities” than “communities of practice” (Nicolini, 2013). Cairns argues,

while the concepts associated with ‘communities of practice’ which underpin the related ‘legitimate peripheral participation’ have been useful as starting points for some reconsideration of theory and practice elements across workplace learning, movement ‘beyond’ these ideas is necessary if the field of theory and research in workplace learning is to progress further in the twenty-first century (L. Cairns, 2011, p. 73).
Professional Learning and Practice

In education, one major site of fifth wave practice theorizing is the University of Technology Sydney and their “Centre for Learning and Change.” Paul Hager is an exemplar of this movement. His own turn to practice arose as a convergence between his role as an instructor in technology and further education and his studies in educational philosophy. As a technology and further education teacher he encountered highly competent practitioners in the applied sciences, engineering, and the arts. Hager reports, “After some reading and research, I rapidly came to the view that received theories and concepts, both philosophical and educational ones more broadly, seemed inadequate to account for the richness and diversity of the skilled performances I was witnessing” (Hager, 2013, p. 1308). In response, Hager has taken up an holistic approach to theorising professional competence and to teaching and learning professional practices (Hager, 2012). Hager and others from University of Technology have been key editors and contributors to the 17 volumes (and counting) of Springer’s Professional and Practice-Based Learning (Billett, Harteis, & Gruber, n.d.), which could be considered as the flagship for the re-turn to practice in professional learning programs.

Hager’s work is obviously philosophical and immensely practical. It is informed by, but not dependent on, Aristotelian discussions of practice and he engages MacIntyre

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29Alison Lee, now deceased, was the founding director of the “Centre for Learning and Change” and has also made a lasting impact on educating educational professionals in Australia and around the world. In her last years, Lee was engaged in a program of collaborative inquiry about the collocation of health and education that included exploring “new practice configurations in health care that manifests a new relationality in the practices and skill requirements for health professionals and consumers alike” (Lee, 2010, p. 73).
with vigor (Hager, 2011). Hager provides a useful taxonomy of practice theories
distinguishing between more and less inclusive notions of practice (Hager, 2012). Less
inclusive explanations are associated with disciplinary interests/professional practices, or
with political-philosophical commitment and a concern for practice as power and control.
Theorists who take a more inclusive approach to practice tend to have an interest in
practice as ontology. Practice ontologies are key to resolving many of the irreducible
dualisms of modernity, but more inclusive practice theories still

require that for behaviours, activities or actions to count as practices, they need to exhibit certain minimal features. Typical examples of such basic features are that practices need to be intentional, or that they need to be rule-governed routines (Hager, 2012, p. 19).

Hager is more appreciative of less inclusive accounts of practice like MacIntyre’s and

critiques Reckwitz’s heuristic practice theory:

First, in contrast to more exclusive accounts, [Reckwitz’ account] inflates the role of routine in practices. Second, as Antonacopoulou (2008:116) argues, it is insufficient in itself to merely recognise the interconnectedness of the various components of practice. Rather, she maintains, useful theorisations will say something about the nature of the interconnections, thereby, for example, enabling them to be investigated empirically. Third, the Reckwitz account down-plays the discursive aspects of practice (Hager, 2012, p. 21).

Site Based Educational Development

The re-turn to practice in Australia goes beyond the University of Technology:

Kemmis et al. (2014) have published their landmark work, Changing Practice, Changing
Education that elaborates a model of site based educational development. We will
explore site based educational development in more detail in the final chapter, but give a brief introduction here. Site based educational development “is the development of


Contributors are mainly from Charles Sturt University, but also from University of Queensland and Griffith University.

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education and educational practices to be appropriately and effectively responsive to the local needs, opportunities and circumstances of students, schools and communities in diverse and different local situations—at each local site” (Kemmis, Wilkinson, et al., 2014, p. 213). Kemmis et al. take up practice theory as neo-Aristotelian (through MacIntyre) and neo-Marxist (through Habermas) but the language of *site* is derived largely from Schatzki’s site ontologies which “forge a path between individualism and hitherto dominant societisms” (Schatzki, 2003).³¹

Site ontologies contend that social life, by which . . . [is meant] human coexistence, is inherently tied to a type of context in which it occurs. The contexts involved, *sites*, are contexts of which some of what exists or occurs within them are inherently parts. Site ontologies maintain that social phenomena can only be analyzed by examining the sites where human coexistence transpires (pp. 175-176).

While there are numerous—mostly Heideggerian—site ontologies, Schatzki’s version “treats the site of social existence as a mesh of practices and arrangements” (p. 191). Kemmis et al. understand that there are two main kinds of arrangements: one more structural which they call *practice architectures* and one more organic which they call *ecologies of practices*. Together, “these arrangements provide the resources that make . . . practice possible; they prefigure practices without predetermining them” (p. 212).

Practice ecologies extend beyond the site and include the formal structuring of administrating, researching, teaching, and learning that make up the educational regime and pedagogical practices of a particular area. Practice architectures are the ongoing

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³¹Schatzki identifies the dominant societisms as having Hegelian (wholism), Durkhemian (social facts), and Saussrian (structuralism) ontologies. His analysis augments Reckwitz (2002b), which distinguishes practice theories from other culturalist theories.
intra-actions of sayings, doings, and relatings that enable and constrain activity in a particular arrangement of practices. Site based educational development is concerned not only for teaching and learning practices in the school, but also for the practices of the communities that make up and surround the school. While there is much to commend site based educational development, I find Gherardi’s approach to ecologies of practices to be much more helpful, especially when it comes to taking up attachment theory. I will return to Kemmis and colleagues’ proposal for site based educational development in the final chapter. In the next chapter, I will finish the first stage of the dissertation by elaborating an ecological approach to practice that can be used for reading other theories that deal with human processes. As such the ecological approach helps to broaden horizons for educational researchers’ understanding of what stands as practice theory and also points to how teachers and administrators might take a practice based approach to the classroom and school.

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32 Kemmis and colleagues add the term “relatings” to the more common pairing of “sayings and doings.” This is reflective of Habermas’ concern for “intersubjectivity” (Edwards-Groves & Kemmis, 2015).
CHAPTER THREE: PRACTICE AS METHOD

In this dissertation I am working with a practice approach to organization and to the development of the person that does not require autonomous individualism as the aim of education. In the previous chapter I gave an overview of contemporary theories of practice. In this chapter I elaborate a more ecological approach to practice as method that is largely funded by Gherardi’s use of practice in practice-based studies of organizational learning. My goal is to present and work with a programmatic, generalized, and inclusive theorizing of practice. Programmatic, in the interests of showing how the practice perspective helps to disrupt the folk psychology of the autonomous individual so that educationalists can better harmonize the personal and social goals of obligatory education. Generalized, because practice is theorized as the centre of and prior to other human activity, affairs, and arrangements. Inclusive, because the polysemic nature of the term practice is taken to be more of an advantage than a limitation.

Ecologies of Practices

Marco Polo describes a bridge, stone by stone. “But which is the stone that supports the bridge?” Kublai Khan asks. “The bridge is not supported by one stone or another.” Marco answers, “but by the line of the arch that they form.” Kublai Khan remains silent, reflecting. Then he adds, “Why do you speak to me of stone? It is the arch that matters to me.” Polo answers, “Without the stones there is no arch.”


As already noted, the re-turn to practice occurred at multiple sites along multiple disciplines. For the purposes of my dissertation, I’m most interested in the ecological
approach to practice that emerged among Gherardi and her colleagues. The association of the term *ecology* with practice can be understood as more or less analytical. For instance, Kemmis and colleagues use the term more empirically, claiming “that practices are living entities and that they coexist in ecologies of practices that are living systems” (Kemmis, Edwards-Groves, Wilkinson, & Hardy, 2012, p. 34). They take pains to line up their elaboration of ecologies of practices with Capra’s (1996) ecological theories (Kemmis, Wilkinson, et al., 2014; see also Kemmis et al., 2012). On the other hand, according to Kemmis and colleagues, many other practice scholars who associate ecology with practice are too vague, too abstract, or too metaphorical (see Kemmis, Wilkinson, et al., 2014, pp. 44–46). In particular, they claim Gherardi lacks “elaboration of what taking an ‘ecological’ perspective entails” (Kemmis et al., 2012, p. 33). However, I regard Gherardi and others’ lack of elaboration as an indication that the usefulness of the term ecology is still emerging for twenty-first century practice theories. One of the struggles is that though the term *ecology* was coined by a nineteenth century zoologist, its etymology and ongoing usage permits it to be regarded as much a sociological term as a physiological one (Schwarz & Jax, 2011b). While I find that Kemmis’ take on ecologies of practices as helpful and insightful, I do not regard it as the final word, just because it is more elaborate and precise. In the rest of the chapter, I take up the term *ecologies of practices* (pluralizing both terms) as given by Kemmis, but informed more by Gherardi’s theorizing on practice and her use of ecology. Further, I take the essays in *Ecology Revisited: Reflecting on Concepts, Advancing Science* (Schwarz & Jax, 2011a) to be informative and suggestive rather than determinative of my own usage of the term ecology.
Practices can be treated as singular objects of empirical inquiry as long as you down-play their intra-actions with the world. In focusing on the intra-actions, practices present as either the nexus around which the social-material is articulated or the context in which the social-material is enacted. All practices happen in a context, but for practice-based-studies, contexts aren’t just containers; they are also resources (see Gherardi, 2012a). The ecological perspective is concerned not only for the fine grain of practices but also the milieu in which they are enacted. From the ecological perspective, practices are at the nexus of the re/production and re/distribution of agency, knowing, and relating (Gherardi, 2009b, p. 115); and at the same time, agency, knowing, and relating are contained by practice arrangements as the “processes and results . . . reflexively create the context of their [own] production” (Gherardi, 2012a, p. 204).

**Sylvia Gherardi**

Gherardi’s work is associated with a largely European turn to practice in organizational research and includes not only Gherardi and her Italian colleagues but also researchers from England (see Jarzabkowski, Balogun, & Seidl, 2007; Whittington, 2004) and Northern Europe (see Miettinen et al., 2009). The contributors to Gherardi and Nicolini’s (2005) *The Passion for Learning and Knowing* give an even fuller picture of the international flavor of practice-based studies of organizations and their discovery and uncovering of the notion of knowledge as organizational practice rather than knowledge as in the minds of leaders and specialists or knowledge as commodity. Gherardi has been at the centre of conversation on the place of knowing as practice in organizational studies. The beginning of that conversation can be marked by the first Special Issue in *Organization* (2000). Informed by “four streams of practice theorizing: the cultural
perspective, situated learning, activity theory and actor-network theory” (Gherardi, 2016, p. 2, see also 2000), Gherardi explored the role of knowing-in-practice in relation to organizational development.  

She reported,

different streams of research, traversing the boundaries of scientific discipline, are converging on an understanding (and a methodology) based on a pragmatic theory of knowing that reframes traditional research into organizational learning. Practice is the figure of discourse that allows the processes of ‘knowing’ at work and in organizing to be articulated as historical processes, material and indeterminate (Gherardi, 2001, p. 137).

Gherardi and colleagues formed a number of new academic communities around the “pleasure of looking for common grounds on which to rediscover the concept of practice” (p. 2). The proliferation of conferences, committees, and conversations around practice produced a bandwagon effect that some considered a threat to any coherent or practical use of the concept of practice (Corradi et al., 2010). The term, practice, is highly malleable and capable of being wielded with incompatible and even opposing meanings. Instead of viewing this as threatening to the emerging community of practice scholarship, Gherardi considers the polysemic and plastic nature of the term, practice, to be more crucial than confusing and is not interested in a unified practice theory (Gherardi, 2016, p. 2). If phenomenologically speaking, knowledge is not something already built that people acquire but rather knowing is something that emerges in the “creative

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33In a retrospective, Gherardi reports,

Another line of inquiry—workplace studies—was not familiar to me as editor of the Special Issue at that time [2000], and it brought into the conversation on practice theorizing the well-established tradition of symbolic interactionism and ethnomethodological research methods (Heath and Button, 2002; Llewellyn and Hindmarsh, 2010) (2016, p. 3).
entanglement of knowing and doing” (2016, p. 2), then even the meaning and fruitfulness of the concept of practice is situated in the environment in which it is articulated.

Gherardi has contributed to both the fourth and fifth wave of practice theorizing. Though she demonstrates critical emancipatory concerns—especially in relation to neo-Marxism (Gherardi, 2009b; Gherardi & Perrotta, 2014a) and feminism (Gherardi, 2016; Gherardi & Rodeschini, 2015)—her main concern is for the relation between learning and knowing in the development of persons and organizations (Gherardi, 2001, 2009c, 2015a; Gherardi & Nicolini, 2005). Her focus on learning and knowing in practice has helped her to study and articulate the way in which practices are implicated in both continuity and change:

One of the advantages of the concept of practice is that it makes it possible to simultaneously interrogate the phenomenon of what becomes stabilized as a “mechanism of order” and what innovates it and makes it adaptive to circumstances which change in time both because of dynamics internal to practices and because of external events that impact on them. When the concept of innovation is based on a theory of practice, it helps dismantle the dichotomy between persistence and change (Gherardi, 2009c, pp. 355–356).

From the practice perspective, innovation is “the constant refinement of practice within an ecology of sociomaterial relations” (Gherardi, 2012b, p. 218). As noted above, Gherardi takes ecology for granted. The term is spread throughout her writings, but her elaboration of ecology is incomplete. In the section that follows, I draw some of her explanations of ecology together. First I work with the three premises she identified as behind an ecological approach to practices. Following that, I review Gherardi’s ecological perspective on researching practices. I will then expand on her work to explore Hall’s conjunctional approach to cultural studies. Following that I elaborate my own take on the practice approach.
Three Premises Behind Practice Approach

For Kemmis et al. (2012), an ecologies of practices approach includes establishing that practice should be regarded as “living entities” (p. 3). Gherardi does not seem to share that same concern, rather she’s employing an eco-logic that permits researchers to follow practices, along with all their connections, enclosures, and accomplishments.34 The three premises behind ecologies of practices: sociomateriality, becoming, and sensible knowing (Gherardi & Rodeschini, 2015), are implicated in each other and while there are good reasons for accepting them, ultimately they are not so much conclusions that one arrives at as choices that one makes; they are elective affinities.35 As per above, not all practice theories are as fully ecological as the one I am laying out, nor are all practice theories that take up some notion of practice ecology going to share in these premises in the same way.

Sociomateriality.

Practice is a sociomaterial phenomenon which involves not only human actors but non-human objects and artefacts in space and time. Social life (and work) happens as part of a nexus of practices and material arrangements “of humans, artefacts, organisms and things of nature” (Schatzki, 2010, p. 129) (Reich & Hager, 2014, p. 422).

Sociomateriality is one of the key insights behind Gherardi’s ecologies of practices and distinguishes it from much earlier work in organizational studies. Orlikowski (2007) explains that much organizational theory simply ignores the pervasive

34 In bio-ecological terms, Gherardi studies practices both ethologically and environmentally.

35 Elective affinities refers to the sense in which we put certain concepts together for pragmatic or poetic reasons, or where connections cannot be demonstrated prior to their performance. See Hopwood (2016) for a discussion of the term, elective affinities, and its association with Weber.
materiality at play in organizations, assuming that matter “does not matter or does not matter very much in everyday organizing” (p. 1436). If matter does show up, it is in the study of “specific cases of technology adoption, diffusion, and use within and across organizations” (p. 1436). Sociomateriality presents an alternative view, asserting “that the social and the material are constitutively entangled in everyday life” (p. 1436). The material and the social are treated in the same register; they are treated symmetrically (Law, 1994). In sociomateriality, Durkheim’s principle that social facts be treated as things is held but also reversed: things are also treated as social facts (Steets, 2016). While we can make analytic distinctions between the social and material, sociomateriality is not about adding the two elements together but rather with sociomateriality “there is no non-material core that can be identified separately” (Hopwood, 2015a, p. 57). From the perspective of sociomateriality, practice starts to take on a fuller definition:

Within an ecological model of interpretation . . . no element (either human or nonhuman) has ontological priority over the others. Hence, action does not start from the actors and their intentionality; rather, it ‘takes place’ in the sociomaterial relations that connect those elements together (Gherardi, 2015b, p. 20; see also Nicolini, 2013).

Sociomateriality involves a commitment to a vocabulary that “undermines and challenges human-centred, cognitive, technical and rationalist notions” of persons and their practices (Hopwood, 2015a, p. 60). It is a kind of epistemology where “practice makes it possible to see and to represent a mode of ordering the social in which doing and knowing are not separated and the knowing subject and the known object emerge in their ongoing intra-action” (Gherardi, 2016, p. 6). Knowing and learning takes place not so much in minds, but in bodies; not just in people, but also in architecture, tools, and other artifacts. Material things take up a sort of agency: interpelling, interrogating, and directing people (see Gherardi, 2009c, 2014), but not in a deterministic fashion:
Study of the practical organization of knowledge, in the form of methods of
talking, reasoning and acting, and the association of human and non-human
elements, is one of the most important directions taken by empirical studies
informed by the practice turn in sociology, anthropology and ethnomethodology,
and it focuses its analysis on the concept of ‘situatedness’. Rather than asking
what kinds of cognitive processes and conceptual structures are involved,
researchers ask what kinds of social engagement and material setting provide the
proper context for knowing, working, learning and innovating (Brown and

**Becoming.**

Practice therefore, has been defined as the process of repetition where deliberate,
habitual or spontaneous performances of a practice enable different dimensions
of a practice to emerge or be re-discovered (Antonacopoulou, 2015, p. 14).

From an ecological perspective, practices and their elements are always
becoming. The person and the social and the attendant artifacts emerge in practice. The
notion of becoming includes related concepts like emergence and formativeness
(Gherardi, 2016) and folding, enfolding, unfolding (Bjørkeng et al., 2009). It is because
of these qualities that practices can appear as if they are living things. This was one of the
major accomplishments in twenty-first century practice theorizing; the appreciation for
the inherent instability of practices. Practices change. All the time. Practices change
because practices form. They form peoples and persons and their bodies. They form
things, nature, the practices themselves; everything is changed in practice. In other words,
even a rut is constantly emerging from the prior condition.

Practices are always embedded. Established practices act as passage points to new
practices; they are simultaneously gateways and conduits but also channels and
kerbing that direct the flow of learning. Exploring practising in the light of
emergence rather than embeddedness does, however, allow us to emphasize how
actors strive to make sense of themselves and their world at the same time as they
are constructing it in their work (Bjørkeng et al., 2009, p. 156).

Practices are also forming the context, they “are simultaneously containers, processes,
and results because they reflexively create the context of their production” (Gherardi,
Practices aren’t just something we can see people doing or hear people saying; they have texture and taste, they can be handled.\textsuperscript{36} Practices share dimensions of times, spaces, people, and the material (see Hopwood, 2015a). In light of all this, the relative stability and durability of practices is not the accomplishment of “a stable, fixed body of knowledge. Rather its accomplishment is responsive, unpredictable, and indeterminate” (Hopwood, 2015a, p. 76). This makes for a great deal of complexity, and one central understanding in complexity, at least in many educational and organizational uptakes of complexity theory, is \textit{emergence}. This is the idea that in (complex adaptive) systems, phenomena, events and actors are mutually dependent, mutually constitutive and actually \textit{emerge together} in dynamic structures (Fenwick, 2012, p. 72).

In relation to education, “if practices are emergent, and their emergence continually produces social realities, then learning must emerge with practice” (Hopwood, 2015a, pp. 75–76). Teachers, learners, administrators, and so on don’t meet as fully-formed entities; instead they emerge as practitioners of intersecting practice-arrangements (classrooms, texts, exams, curricula, etc.) with a history and a shared future. The different participants are forming the practices that are forming them, through “sensible knowing, co-formation of ideas, experimenting with playfulness, translating and hybridizing material, realization, and repetition” (Gherardi, 2016, p. 13; see also Gherardi & Perrotta, 2014b).

\textbf{Sensible knowing.}

An aesthetic sensibility in our research means that we may approach questions of practices and learning as (inter)corporeal and multi-sensorial (Strati 2007). This

\textsuperscript{36}“Taste may therefore be conceived in terms of taste-making, i.e. a situated activity that rests on learning and knowing how to appraise specific performances of a practice” (Gherardi, 2009d, p. 538).
resists the privileging of sight as we also consider postures, movements, sounds, touch, smells . . . This requires forms of evocative and metaphorical expression that counter scientific reductionism and formalization (Hopwood, 2015a, p. 82).

The third major premise behind ecologies of practices is sensible knowing. Gherardi’s research has demonstrated how organizational-knowing and learning-in-practice are “second-sexed” (2000, p. 220) which implies, among other things, that knowing and learning are fabricated as “a bricolage of material, mental, social and cultural resources” (Gherardi, 2003, p. 357). For Gherardi, knowing-how is not an object of the mind (or even of the social) that precedes practice-in-action. Instead, knowing-how and practice-in-action are two ways of talking about the same thing: “to know is to be capable of participating with the requisite competence in the complex web of relationships among people, material artifacts, and activities” (Gherardi, 2015b, p. 16). Such knowing is more than functional, more than objective, and operates beyond “the domain of the gaze” (Gherardi, 2000, p. 220). What is more, Gherardi’s focus is on knowing rather than knowledge and for Gherardi, knowing entails learning: “the distinction between knowledge and learning is avoided” (Gherardi, 2012a, p. 20; see also Blackler, 1995; Reich & Hager, 2014). Such knowing is embodied, multi-sensorial, and aesthetic; implying

the use of sensible knowledge and aesthetic understandings—not limited to the visual but including all the senses—to comprehend the interconnection of the cognitive, emotional, political and normative aspects in the everyday practice of education (Landri, 2012, p. 96).

Sensible knowing “arises from multiple perspectives and negotiations, and in so doing it delegitimizes a univocal narrative of scientific authority” (Gherardi, 2001, p. 137) and at the same time brings the body back into learning. Sensible knowing is in contrast to the scientific rationality that make up much organizational research.
“Scientific rationality, by exalting the scholastic attitude (i.e., knowledge generation through detachment from practice), disconnects knowledge from its social context and reduces human existence into cognitive knowing.” Scientific rationalities “fail to do justice to the logic underlying practice” (Sandberg & Tsoukas, 2011, p. 341). In following parsimony, they under-appreciate the whole and in trying to achieve the universal, they discount local, contingent, and emergent realities.

Sensible knowing also is in contrast with more idealist forms of social constructionism that “contradicts our experience of the body as a lived reality” (Hopwood, 2015a, p. 89). Sensible knowing resists not just scientism but also epistemic relativism: “worlds or realities are not simply ‘constructed’, they have to be practised or enacted into being and this involves choices, obstructions and interference from other ontological realities” (Hawkins & Race, 2011, p. 116). Taken this way, practice theory avoids both essentialism and complete relativism; “the subjugation of the bodily to the mental or verbal is epistemologically fallacious” (Hopwood, 2015a, p. 89). Reality is fabricated through practices in ways that are both contingent and enduring and which include interaction with the material; and sometimes the material world bites back (Nicolini, 2013, p. 8; see also Landri, 2012). For instance, practice-based learning includes navigating and performing asymmetric social relations. For example,

Strati (2007: 69-70) illustrates the relation between sensible knowledge and practice-based learning with various examples. One of them concerns a group of building labourers working on a roof without safety protection. Work on the roof involved the senses of touch, ‘feeling the roof under your feet’, and those of hearing and sight, ‘looking with the ears’ at the movements and noises of workmates and objects. The perceptive-sensory capacities were therefore crucial for performance of the roofing work, like others, because they influenced the choice of that kind of work, its teaching, its learning and the selection of those capable of performing it. More generally, they comprised every aspect of what people do when they work (Corradi et al., 2010, p. 275).
Gherardi’s work with sensible knowing is probably one of her more original contributions to practice-based studies of organizational and work-place learning:

If practice is conceived as a situation in which human and non-human agents constantly interact, the distinction among working, learning and innovating as distinct and separate activities disappears. Practices may thus qualify as the units of analysis in study of how old and new knowledge can coexist in their constant tension and of how innovation can be a continuous process that, not in discontinuity but continuity, constantly carries forward a dynamic refinement of practices through the production and mobilization of situated knowledge. Practising a practice not only leads to stability through habituation but also to diversity, brought by the unstable structure of practices themselves. There is always an ambiguity, and undecidability in practice, as in an open text (Gherardi, 2012b, pp. 227–228).

While Gherardi’s contribution to organizational learning and knowing have been taken up largely in the context of education of professionals, there is no reason it could not also be used to explore obligatory education, especially in an ecologies of practices approach. This linkage is strengthened from an organizational perspective on the development of the person, where notions similar to sociomateriality and becoming are also found.

**Perspective Taking**

One of Gherardi’s earliest invocations of an ecological approach to practice was in an introduction to a special issue on *The Critical Power of the ‘Practice Lens’* (2009b). In the article, Gherardi laid out three ways scholars approach practice in practice based studies: 1) objectively as patterns that arrange and organize; 2) subjectively as activities that are performed; or 3) as ecologies or textures of connections and their consequences. The terms, objective and subjective, are about the position of the researcher rather than an epistemological stance. Objective is from the “outside” and subjective is from the “inside” (see Bourdieu, 1990; Evered & Louis, 1981). From the outside, practices are recurrent action patterns. From the inside, practices are organized human behaviour. From the ecological perspective, practices are “the effect of a weaving-together of
interconnections in action, or as a ‘doing’ of society” (Gherardi, 2009b, p. 118). Each of these three fields has an epistemological and an ethical aspect. In the objective stance, researchers are looking at practice accountability within the organization and the way that knowledge emerges from arrays of practice. In the subjective stance, researchers are looking at the dynamic negotiation of order and alignment and the practical organization of knowledge, moving from “an epistemology of possession to an epistemology of practice” (Corradi et al., 2008, p. 24). In the ecological stance, researchers are looking at emancipatory and exploitative accomplishments and the objects of knowledge created by practice.

Researchers taking the subjective stance are interested in the “intellectual, passionate, ethical, and aesthetic attachment that ties subjects to objects, technologies, the places of practices, and other practitioners” (Gherardi, 2015b, p. 20). When taking the outsider’s stance, researchers are interested in “practices as containers in which learning, working and innovating simply ‘happen’ and are intertwined” (Corradi et al., 2008, p. 25). The ecological perspective brings these together, considering “the social effects of a single practice in relation to its being practiced within society,” especially in relation to “reciprocal, cyclical relationships through which practice creates and recreates the objectified social structures and conditions” for the practices. Such an approach permits the research to interrogate “the emancipatory or exploitative effects of a social practice” (Gherardi, 2009b, pp. 118–119).

Quoting at length:

Practice may therefore be an object of doing, a time of doing, and a socially sustained way of doing [outside perspective]. And in all three cases knowledge is present in the form of learning intrinsic to the doing—a knowledgeable doing—and knowledgeable doing sustained by social norms appreciative of the doing of
things well, beautifully, usefully, etc. [inside perspective]. The complexity of these three senses can coexist without having to resort to a definition of practice which restricts it to the activities or operations internal to the practice, or to only the processual dimension of practice that develops through time and according to the specific modes of that doing, or only to the institutionalization of the social canons of good or bad practice. We may say with the words of Llewellyn and Spence (2009: 1420) that ‘practice is reproduced through ordinary activity, but at the same time practice is a resource that enables people to recognize and assemble situated activities’ (Gherardi, 2011, p. 49).

From the inside, practices enable and constrain actors and their work. From the outside, practices accomplish the organization and orchestration of people and things. From an ecological perspective, different elements of the practice—times, space, bodies, things— are produced and reproduced with no element having “ontological priority over the others” (Gherardi, 2012b, p. 225; see also Nicolini, 2011; Orlikowski, 2007). Action is understood as “‘taking place’ or ‘happening’, as being performed through a network of connections-in-action, as life-world and dwelling” (Gherardi, 2009b, p. 115). There are three main forms of connections-in-action or conjunctions, which I explore in the next section.

**Ecoconjunctions of Practice**

As noted, taking a practice approach can help resolve many of the irreducible dualisms handed down by euro-modernity—agency-structure; inside-outside; intention-behaviour; individual-community. The resolution comes not in providing a solution but rather in providing an alternate vocabulary, where hybridity is no longer suppressed but appears as a matter of course (see Grossberg, 2010; Law, 2011a). This alternate

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37In order to get a handle on texture, Hopwood (2014) offers four dimensions to texture of practice: times, spaces, bodies, and things. These could be considered as calibrations that the researcher makes as she zooms in and out on practice.
vocabulary gives scholars a different starting point that appreciates not only the way that practices articulate around themes of dominance, oppression, emancipation, but also the way that practices gather people to one another and to things in ongoing adaptive structuring.

Much critical and cultural theory focuses on the way people organize around practices of competition or antagonisms (Slack, 1996). Taking an ecological perspective permits researchers to expand the focus to include at least two other kinds of organization: cooperative/adaptive ones and background practices that sustain peoples and persons. In ecobiology, competition is associated with the concept of *niche*; cooperation/adaptation is associated with *microcosms*, and sustaining practices with the background flows of organic matter and energy in an environment (Schwarz & Jax, 2011b). Appropriating Grossberg and Hall’s conjunctural view (1986), we could speak of these three as articulation, attachment, and assemblage. Articulation “is the assertion of struggle over necessity, struggles both to produce structure of domination and to resist them” (Grossberg, 1997, p. 179). It produces “identity or structural unity out of, on top of, complexity, difference, contradiction” (p. 177).

Articulation was the main concern for Hall and Grossberg, but Grossberg attempted to elaborate on other practice arrangements or plateaus (Grossberg, 2010). He struggles to name the other two plateaus, in part because the naming involves articulation as a discursive practice. The second field, the microcosm where we observe something like adaptive cooperation, is related to what sociologists and psychologists regard as *attachment*. We’ll explore attachment from the psychological perspective more in the next chapter, but from the sociological perspective,
attachment is defined as the reflexive result of a corporeal, collective and orchestrated practice regulated by methods that, in their turn, are ceaselessly discussed (Gomart and Hennion, 1999) within the community of practitioners . . . The attachment to the object of practice—be it of love or hate, or of love and hate—is what makes practices socially sustained by judgments related not only to utility, but to ethics and aesthetics as well (Gherardi, 2009d, p. 537).

For Gherardi, attachment has to do with belonging, taste-making, gaining pleasure. It is the dwelling (Heidegger, 1971) of the amateur. Here we find hybridity, positivity, gathering-together, emergence, improvisation (Grossberg, 2010, pp. 201-202; 241-242).

The third practice arrangement is hard to describe without rendering it in terms of the other two: articulation or attachment. The Deleuzian concepts of “assemblage” and “rhizomatic” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1976) overlap with this field. This is the place of pure affect, of the visceral, of unembellished desire and aversion. It provides the energy and material for articulation and attachment, but it bides no explanation. This is the texture of life, the everyday that rarely gets recorded except for in the interests of the other two fields. Consequently, it is hard to recognize or to speak of. When we do become aware of this space, it is usually with negative affect: habits as rut or drudgery; enjoyment as mere amusement or overwhelming distraction. This third space is sensual, but in non-instrumental and non-relational ways. It is the practice of shifting in your seat. Typing on the keyboard. Reading the screen. Tuning out the background noise, while attending to your name. A little adjustment to the temperature. This is also the world of amusement and sheer delight, of repulsion and disgust. It is the world where “there are no words.”

Taking a practice approach, opening ourselves to sensible knowing can help us get a taste for this third conjunction. We can see it in Ibn Battuta’s (1929) introduction to Travels in Asia and Africa, 1325-1354,

I left Tangier, my birthplace, on Thursday, 2nd Rajab 725, being at that time twenty-two years of age, with the intention of making the Pilgrimage to the Holy
House and the Tomb of the Prophet.

I set out alone, finding no companion to cheer the way with friendly intercourse, and no party of travellers with whom to associate myself. Swayed by an overmastering impulse within me, and a long-cherished desire to visit those glorious sanctuaries, I resolved to quit all my friends and tear myself away from my home. As my parents were still alive, it weighed grievously upon me to part from them, and both they and I were afflicted with sorrow (p. 43; emphasis added).

What is remarkable in this passage is that the first conjunction—the competitive one—is backgrounded and almost invisible. His journey does not begin in pursuit of fame or fortune. He spends a great deal of time elaborating on the second plateau, but in terms of reversal. He distances himself from the place and people to which he belongs. There will be no friends, no caravan, no parents to accompany him. He “tears [himself] away from his house.”

This leaving is set against an “overmastering impulse” but there is nothing there to answer the query, “Why now? Why make the pilgrimage now? Alone?” His pilgrimage makes no sense in terms of either competition or cooperation, only in terms of guttural intentions, desires, and impulses. However, the overmastering impulse to visit Mecca and Medina does not reside solely within Ibn Battuta. The pilgrimage on which he is about to embark is a social practice, and

every practice contains a know-how knowledge of ethno-methods. Every practice implies a particular routinized mode of intentionality, i.e. of wanting or desiring certain things and avoiding others. And, finally, every practice contains a certain practice-specific emotionality (even if that means a high control of emotions). Wants and emotions thus do not belong to individuals but—in the form of knowledge—to practices (Reckwitz, 2002b, p. 254).

An ecological perspective takes account not only of competition and cooperation but of aesthetics—of tastes and textures. It calls for an aesthetic sensibility in order to resist “the privileging of sight as we also consider postures, movements, sounds, touch,
smells” (Hopwood, 2015a, p. 82). The three conjunctural spaces are always implicated in each other and just as ecobiologists study the same organism in its niche, its microcosm, and according to the background energy, so too ecosociologists can study the same practices in each of the plateaus. This is in contrast to euro-modern approaches that require scholars to choose between competing “models of actions that focus on the calculation of interests or the evaluations of norms” (Bueger & Gadinger, 2015, p. 1). Practice approaches permit scholars to refuse the choice and at the same time affords scholars the tools to analyse the choice itself as arrangement of particular practices that include calculating, evaluating, norming, and reflecting. The ecological perspective equips the scholar to take in the “larger picture” and follow the way such practices are arranged and played out in the wider milieu or cultural scheme of euro-modernity.

Not only does ecologies of practices approach invite the multi-sensorial, it also invites the multi-temporal. We live not just in “objective time of physics, the universe, inevitable, linear chronology, time that is measured, used up, or consumed” (Hopwood, 2015a, p. 140), but also activity time where “past, present, and future occur at a single stroke” (Hopwood, 2015a, p. 142; see also Schatzki, 2006a; Shove, 2010). We all know objective time; we may not like it, but we all know it. As commodity, objective time is relatively stable and measurable: enter the clock and accounting. Students start and end their day watching clock-time. Teachers assign tests and give reports in submission to a calendar system. Activity time is not just endured, it is enacted on a trajectory that becomes entangled with other trajectories to which we are conjoined. A knot-work of multiple trajectories each enacted as a “long now.” Children in the learning society tend to enact three different but over-lapping times: their age as objective calendar time; their
development marked as progress; and their schooling marked as grades. When caregivers (parental, educational, or other professional) act as if these are all one time, they put a great deal of stress on the child (see Hopwood, 2015a).

Something like euro-modernity has its niches where struggles for power and emancipation are the main story. But it also has those practice arrangements that gather people together, where people live into harmony rather than in conflict. Even in conflict, there are stories of a strange kind of harmony captured in idioms like “band of brothers” and “politics makes strange bedmates.”

**Approaching Practice**

One key difference [between practice theories and other cultural theories] is that . . . practice theory locates the social in ‘practices’. This means that other central components of human action and social order, such as body, cognition, things, knowledge, language/discourse, structure/process and human agency are conceptualized and explored through their embeddedness in practice, rather than through mind, interaction or texts. In other words, human action and social order emerge, and attain meaning and intelligibility, from social practices (Schatzki 1996: 13) (Sandberg & Dall’Alba, 2009, p. 1352).

Taking an ecological approach does not mean that we study the whole as if it has some unifying order (see Wellmon, 2015, p. 95), rather it means that researching requires attention to entities in relation to their environments. The practice approach helps us to approach organization and development with an eco-logic where dynamics like order, continuity, change, and innovation are always present in practice. Such an approach permits educators to take up organization and development in all their complexity. For instance, the entity I am concerned with is the developing person, especially as it is organized through infant attachment relationships and in the practice niche of obligatory education. As we will see in the next chapter, obligatory education is a set of practice-arrangements as institution. Mass compulsory schooling emerged alongside nineteenth
century nation-states. It was originally dependent on the nation-state but over the last part of the twentieth century, obligatory education has taken on a life of its own. Practice approaches help us to understand the relation between obligatory education, nation-state, and developing the autonomous person without resorting to functionalist explanations that disregard important data like the spread of obligatory education with little empirical justification or coercive force (see Meyer & Ramirez, 2009).

While twenty-first century practice theorizing argues that individuals and communities are both an accomplishment of social practices, the actor as person is often under-theorized. This is for a number of reasons, the most obvious being that much of the work on practices is sociological in nature and regards practices as social even when performed by an individual. Because it regards practices and not individual action as the site of the social, the subject is decentred, especially in third wave theories of practice, power, and performativity (see Butler, 2010; Foucault, 1982), or fifth wave approaches that take up post-humanisms (see K. Barad, 2003). Further, notions of the individual, self, or subject are often enmeshed with modernist disjunctive logic that over-theorize agency and the individual (see Brubaker & Cooper, 2000; Grossberg, 1997; Law & Singleton, 2003). As a result, almost any representation of the person will look under-theorized in comparison. Later, I will point to Sroufe’s representation of human development as a theory of practice that is compatible with ecoperspectives on practice.

Practice Ontology

for the research practice, even though neither field overtly employs a practice vocabulary (see Nicolini, 2013). As well, many taxonomies of practice include Judith Butler as a
practice theorist even though for Butler, Implicit in ecologies of practices approach is practice ontology. As I close this chapter, I give a brief tour of a practice ontology. Think of what follows as a tour to be taken rather than an argument to be made. Broadly speaking, practice-based studies involve the examination and theorization of productive patterns of activity. What is produced by such patterns of activity? All sorts of things, but in general, we’re speaking of pools of order: practice arrangements like houses and cars, but also institutions like education and banking. In other words, anything that can be made to matter. That’s another thing that patterns of activity produce, mattering: “the world is an ongoing open process of mattering” (Barad, 2003, p. 817). This is related to Latour’s move from “matters of fact” to “matters of concern” (Latour, 2004). Law adds in the hyphen, “matter-ing” since “it indexes the move from stability, things in themselves to things in process. From object to Ding, to gathering” (Law, 2004b, p. 2).³⁸ Gatherings are also produced by practice: intersections, entanglements, knotworks (see Engeström & Sannino, 2010). These too are an ordering; to speak of matter-ing is to speak of emplacement.

Matter-ing is always material; meaning isn’t, especially if you are doing the “Cartesian splits” (Lerner, 2007, p. 5). Not all practices that matter have meaning. Practices may gather meaning over time, but it takes a while. Novices and outsiders want to make practices meaningful. “Why are you doing that?” “Why are they doing it that way?” An account is given, a story is told, memories are made, and often summaries are confused with causes (see Waters, Crowell, Elliott, Corcoran, & Treboux, 2002, p. 238). Practice research isn’t looking for causes; it’s looking for entailments and affordances.

³⁸In earlier German, Ding referred to both an object and a meeting of concern.
It’s unwieldy. We’re well-trained in writing and reading as if practices didn’t matter; as if what matters is getting to the “Why?” The practice approach requires re-training to pay attention to practices. That means we’ll need neologisms and a different syntax and vocabulary. Like adding gerunds to nouns instead of articles—developing person, deliberating publics.

We can’t always know ahead of time which practice arrangements are productive, how they will matter, or what they intersect with. That’s one reason to take a more inclusive approach as to what makes a recurrent set of behaviors a practice. So what does the research look for? Organized sayings and doings that leave a trace. Practice is a sociomaterial relationship and not just a system of activity (see Gherardi, 2012b, p. 225). Enacting a practice always depends on the intra-action of several indispensable elements: actors, artefacts, affects, knowing-how, and multiple organizing teloi (see Bueger & Gadinger, 2015; Reckwitz, 2002b; Schatzki, 2002). This is where Nicolini’s (2013) capstone work on practice theory and research is so helpful, offering researchers a toolkit to zoom in on “practices and their accomplishments” and zoom out to explore the relationships of practices, bodies, and things in spaces and times (p. 213; see also Hopwood, 2014).

From the outside, practices are at the nexus of the various elements—actors, artefacts, affects, knowing-how, and multiple organizing teloi. From the inside, these various elements are embedded in practices and though the insider knows how to do, they don’t always know what they’re doing. Artefacts ground practices. Artefacts are things-in-use—hammers, keyboards, scientific journals. Artefacts are also things like architectures, the material surround, and even epistemic objects. Knowing-how does the
heavy lifting, but it is materialized not just in actors, but also in the artefacts. Affects are largely un-articulated; articulated affects are part of knowing-how (see Reckwitz, 2012), especially as it relates to matters of maintenance, repair, and revision (Gherardi, 2004b; see Henke, 1999). Practices persist because people keep on doing them, but practices also find endurance in artefacts that makes “social reproduction beyond temporal and spatial limits possible” (Fawns, 2008, p. 163).

We have suggested that from an ecological perspective, practices are arrangements of recurrent activities that have and make histories. Practice arrangements “are molar units; that is, they are complex wholes composed of other ‘smaller’ elements—for example, bodily motions and simpler actions” (Nicolini, 2013, p. 10) that “must be explored along different dimensions and moments” (Nicolini, 2009a, p. 196; see also Harvey, 1996). They are made up of a number of sociomaterial elements. As molar units, practices not only contain smaller elements but are also contained by and configured with other arrangements. Practices are at the nexus of the social. The social is organized in practice. Practice approaches structures as structuring; as temporary durables; as ecological sites of contestation or cooperation. Practice creates context and doesn’t just have a context; this is relational and ecological as much as it is processual.

Recurrence takes place in four dimensions: times, spaces, bodies, and things. “These dimensions are essential, but often rendered invisible” in mainstream explorations of the social (Hopwood, 2014, p. 349). As with geometry, these dimensions are not ontologically distinct. Instead, the dimensions should be regarded as tools for analysing, exploring, and explaining the situated texture of practices. Practice times are polychronic. Researchers can look at a practice-arrangement all at once—synchronic, or they can look
at the flow of the practice—diachronic. But not all diachronic time is clock time; practices have a rhythm all their own. Further, practice time is more than either synchronic or diachronic, it is also polychronic. Time may not be reversible, but sometimes the past is brought forward to protect the present or to project preferred futures. From a practice ontology, this is more than metaphorical or existential. It is practices that are the smallest and prior unit of analysis; time belongs to social practices: it doesn’t matter what objects we use to make time more accountable—sun, moon, sand, pendulums, or atomic cycles—they all serve practice arrangements.

Practices have the weight of history behind them. Practices always leave a trail; wherever you find a trail, you will usually find a practice or its remnants. Writing and reading is one way to make the trails easier to trace and make practice more durable. Practices are training for a future; that carries a lot of weight too. One of the main characteristics of modern institutions is universalised and rationalised practices (like mission, vision, values talk). This means that the tracks that institutions leave aren’t hard to see, but they’re easy to miss unless we look for them. That’s a lot of power. Rather than “keeping track” of intentions (Eichner, 2014, p. 23; see also M. Bratman, 2007), practice research follows practices, whether or not they go off the path. Practices always have weight, they don’t always have power. Practices replay the past; usually in the interests of either protecting or projecting the future.

Practices are embodied and not just enacted. Practice communities are embedded in, and embed practices. In such communities, rules are resources for action and not just simple prescriptions. So too, routines:

Practices are routinized bodily activities; as interconnected complexes of behavioral acts they are movements of the body. A social practice is the product
of training the body in a certain way: when we learn a practice, we learn to be bodies in a certain way (and this means more than to ‘use our bodies’) (Reckwitz, 2002b, p. 251).

Such a perspective helps us to recognize and respect the routine intra-actions between caregivers and the bodily response of the young and the otherwise immobile person. It is the routine practices of feeding and cleaning and attending that matter to both bodies in the caregiving relationship. The durability of a practice is related to the intra-weaving of the temporal, spatial, bodily, and material dimensions. As bodies are formed in practice they are made more or less durable: the same routines permit the ballerina to dance more graceful even as they make her feet more gnarled. Practices are carried from one location to another by bodies; and when the same practice arrangements are enacted in different locales, bodies become isomorphic and as bodies become more isomorphic they are better able to carry on the practice together. Picture sports teams in their uniforms made to look the same, but also the way athlete’s bodies are trained to look the same so that opposing teams match each other not only in their clothing but in their bodily shape.

It is not just bodies, but also things that become isomorphic and wear down through practice. Sometimes the wearing down is an improvement, like the breaking-in of a baseball glove or the feel of a well-used hammer; other times the wearing down ends in break-down or failure like most of the components in a non-maintained car. Practices make things different and there are so many people using so many things in the same way, that we are living in an Anthropocene, where almost nothing is untouched by human practices. For example, rising CO₂ levels and the threat of global climate change shows that we don’t have to intentionally handle things to change things (see Latour, 2014). This has led a number of activists to recognize that the dispersal and using of fossil fuels are tightly intra-woven practices that make up much of the doings of contemporary life.
This means that it is doubtful that policy initiatives around providing the right information and incentives are likely to be effective unless there is widespread change in practicing consumption (see Mele & Russo-Spena, 2015; Shove, 2010; Shove et al., 2012; Southerton, 2013; Warde, 2014).

Just as practice makes different kinds of time, it also makes different kinds of space, so that people occupying the same locale might be enacting different space. A clear example of this: just because there’s a teacher and students in the same room doesn’t mean that they’re all there for learning, and a teacher’s pronouncement: “Pay attention, this is a learning space!” doesn’t make it so. These four dimensions: times, spaces, bodies, and things are all present in practice. Together they form and give practices texture, and implicit in these four dimensions are assumptions about learning that build on a performative notion of knowledge (knowing); an epistemology characterised by provisionality, uncertainty, contingency and multiplicity; and ontological assumptions in which knowing and multiple realities are fluid, fragile and in constant flux through mutual connection (Hopwood, 2014, p. 360).

For twenty-first century practice theories, every performance of a practice transforms the actors, the practice, and the social-material arrangements; practice enables and constrains agency. Practice theory speaks in terms of social structuring rather than social structure. Both continuity and change are an accomplishment of practices. The social is not static; change is the constant. Transformation is in sayings and other kinds of doings and not just in the discursive. Learning is always in practice. Learning involves the creative and collective arrangement and re-arrangement of knowing-in-practice. Such knowing is not prior to or an after-effect of practice. This suggests that reality and its knowing is an ongoing accomplishment of practices and that the social world is not so much constructed as it is an ongoing accomplishment, produced and performed in
practice. It also suggests that creativity is not just required in designing innovative practice-arrangement, but also in their adoption, use, and maintenance (see Gherardi, 2016; Gherardi & Perrotta, 2014a).

**Expanding Practice Horizons**

My method includes a practice approach to understanding theory. I do this based on the assumption that if practices are the smallest and prior unit of social analysis, then almost all productive social analysis involves practice even though the analysis may not be framed in terms of practice. As such, there are a number of theories of practice that don’t even present as practice theory. Nicolini, for instance, identifies cultural historical activity theory and ethnomethodology as tools performativity is a far more important term than practice (see Butler, 2010; Rouse, 2007).³⁹

In the next chapter I do a genealogy of the autonomous individual in obligatory education. One of the tools I use in that genealogy is the research of the Stanford School. From the practice perspective, their deployment of institutional logics (e.g., isomorphism) is unnecessary and distracting. However, their longitudinal cross-national research into educational practices is rigorous and imaginative and when examined more closely can be understood as research into practices. Further, sociological institutionalism shares with practice theorizing a rejection of functionalist explanations of social phenomena and a concern for meaningful activity patterns. In one sense, practice researchers are historians of the immediate.

³⁹See Gherardi (2008, fig. 3.9.1) for a picture of the “roots of the intellectual traditions of the study of practice based studies” (p. 521), only a few of which are recognized as practice theories.
The second section of the next chapter is much more praxiographic. It involves a critical history of education which includes a neo-Foucaultian take on the psy-complex (Rose, 1996). Such a move has been prefigured by Reich and Girdwood’s (2012) practice-based use of governmentality to explore learning practices in social services training in Australia. Martin and McLellan’s analysis of contemporary practices of educational psychology uses a similar focus on governmentality and includes a document analysis and interrogation of educational practice and policies (A.-M. T. McLellan, 2008).
CHAPTER FOUR: OBLIGATORY EDUCATION AND AUTONOMOUS INDIVIDUALISM

In this chapter I explain how it has come to be that much current education is oriented towards producing the *autonomous individual* whether or not such an outcome is achievable or is in the best interests of the student, the student’s family and culture of origin, or even the nation-state that mandates the education (Callan, 1994; Carr, 2000; Cuypers, 1992; Dearden, 1972; Frank & Meyer, 2002; Martin, 2006b, p. 311; J. W. Meyer, 2007; J. W. Meyer & Ramirez, 2009). I will show 1) that obligatory education and autonomous individualism are strongly coupled, and related 2) that despite stated intentions otherwise, many of the practices of obligatory education tend to exacerbate rather than ameliorate for problems like compulsive consumerism and neo-colonialism.

I show the strong coupling between obligatory education and the autonomous individual by appealing to the findings of John Meyer and colleagues as articulated through their theoretical research project, commonly called World Society Theory (see Krücken & Drori, 2009 for a compendium of WST). Through research and observations funded by a Foucaultian critical history of the psy-complex in education (Hultqvist, 1997; Martin & McLellan, 2013; Popkewitz, 1998; Rose, 1996) I will problematize the relation between obligatory education and autonomous individualism in relation to consumer capitalism and neo-colonialism. Though I reference school promoters and educational philosophers in the following account, this is more to establish patterns than provenance. From a practice perspective, the widespread prevalence of autonomous individualism is
not a consequence of a set of rational decisions, but rather emerges from practices arrangements, only some of which are discursive and directed toward promoting the autonomous individual.

I begin this chapter by giving brief introductions to both WST and to critical history. I show how to take a practice reading of the findings of WST without having to work with their structuralist explanations of the phenomena under study. Critical histories already have a strong practice element, associated as they are with third wave practice theorising (see Chapter 2). From these two strands, and from my own documentary analysis of school promoters over the centuries, I assemble a critical history of the autonomous individual in relation to obligatory education and the psy-complex. Following that I rehearse some prevailing criticism of the autonomous individual and developmental psychology, all in the interests of working towards a more ecological approach to human development in education.

**Critical History**

Critical histories stand in contraposition to “Whig histories” and the progressive belief that the present is a “rational and ameliorative evolution” (Martin & McLellan, 2013, p. 7). Critical history refuses to valorize any period of history and considers treating history as ordered patterns that repeat themselves as a recapitulation fallacy, imputing a cause and effect to the patterns themselves. Critical history explores the past in order to describe the conditions which make possible the present.

Thus, the entire purpose of critical historical inquiry, especially in the social and psychological sciences, is to increase our awareness of the ways in which social historical conditions and practices (including the assumptions, methods, findings, teachings, and interventions of social and psychological sciences) have entered into the history of our current societal institutions and practices (in areas such as
politics and education) and even into our contemporary understandings of ourselves and others (Martin & McLellan, 2013, p. 8).

My work is not to look into things “deeper” than other kinds of history, but I am looking for connections and their unravellings that are sometimes missed. And while critical history is part of “the self-clarification of the struggles and wishes of the age” (Marx, 1975, p. 209), that is, the history that the dominant culture doesn’t want you to read, doing critical history includes surfacing the way that the historian is her or himself making up history by talking and writing about it.

Further, taking up a “scheme model of culture,” I understand that humans are not the only actors in history. I’m not looking for conspirators, puppet-masters, or the person(s) behind the curtains. In particular, I am not concerned with establishing the intellectual provenance of autonomous individualism. This is one reason I appreciate Meyer and WST: it is able to give an account for the existence, prevalence, and persistence of the autonomous individual without appealing to its eponymity. Beyond this, the Stanford Group is able to explain globalization, neoliberalism, and new management in terms of the spread of mass education and other new institutions rather than merely in terms of economics or politics. And so, the history.

**Meyer and World Society Theory**

If “one of the great discoveries of political thought at the end of the eighteenth century—was the idea of society” (Foucault, 1984, p. 242), then Meyer et al.’s WST

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40 Attaching names to an ideology, concept, or event can be useful for “pedagogical packaging,” but when reified, eponymity can contribute to Whig history and obscure the cultural waves at play (see Bent, 1965). Much of my analysis is connected to schools or research or thought: Sroufe et al., Meyer et al., Foucaultian, etc. These names should not be regarded as the inventor or sole originator of a theory.
helps to: 1) show that there exists at some level a world society; 2) the importance of the autonomous individual in such a society; and in particular, 3) the recursive role that mass education has played in the development of a highly standardized “universalistic individualism” (Boli et al., 1985, p. 156).

Both WST and practice theory are concerned with explaining why so much organizational change is diffused rather than directed. This means that Meyer and colleagues are also interested in why so much planned change does not take effect. In institutional theories, the lack of follow through is known as decoupling. While most practice theories focus on situated practices WST takes a macro-sociological stance that focuses on institutionalized models, scripts, and agency that are enacted at the level of world culture. From the practice perspective, the macro-sociological stance should be regarded as a specialized focus on widespread practice arrangements rather than as an ontological category. However, working at the level of practice arrangements helps educationists become sensitive to the variety of ways that the New Public Management diffuses throughout the educational complex despite the resistance from critical pedagogues and other educators with similar concerns.

More than forty years ago, John Meyer and his colleagues in Stanford’s School of Education started asking, what accounts for the proliferation of mass education in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries? Their research led them to the conclusion that mass education correlates with the rise of nation-states in nineteenth century Europe (Francisco O. Ramirez & Boli, 1987, p. 9) and the proliferation of the nation-state construct on a global scale during the twentieth century (J. W. Meyer, Ramirez, & Soysal, 1992, p. 146). Over time, the Stanford group’s research developed into a theoretical research project (J.
Situated in the field of sociological neo-institutionalism, this theory is derived from a constructivist and phenomenological epistemology combined with quantitative methodologies which “provide a platform for bold, provocative theoretical arguments” (Krücken & Drori, 2009, p. 5). Their main argument is that since at least the mid-twentieth century there has existed a set of scripts that operate at a global level, drawing legitimacy from and legitimating the modern nation-state and its institutions: mainly education, banking, military, and public health (J. W. Meyer, Boli, Thomas, & Ramirez, 1997; J. W. Meyer & Jepperson, 2009).

These models and scripts afford for social order and cohesion which “contra Parsons and Merton, depends more on the degree of validation of collective reality—the pragmatic acceptance of rules and accounts as in place and binding—than upon the endorsement of it” (Jepperson, 2002, p. 233). As such, WST theory deals with the more cooperative aspect of social ecology, “just as in the American society depicted by Tocqueville (1836), but less sympathetically by Sinclair Lewis (1922, not to mention Foucault 1991, Miller & Rose 2008)” (J. W. Meyer, 2010b, p. 11). Such a perspective helped World Society researchers to argue “that individualism was unlikely just an outcome of people’s aggregated social experiences, but rather a collective doctrinal construction and individual enactment” (Jepperson, 2002, p. 251).

In phenomenological models, the actor on the social stage is a scripted identity and enacts scripted action (Berger & Luckmann 1967). In such models, thus, the institutional system—the organizations and cultural meanings that write and rewrite the scripts—becomes central, and the actors are seen as partly derivative on a very rich institutional environment. And in these models, questions about

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41While quantitative research and constructivist stances appear to be methodologically contradictory, the last several decades have seen a move towards digital humanities and wide reading where the use of quantitative research is found to be entirely consistent with phenomenological concerns.
what forces create and modify the casual institutional scripts also become central (J. W. Meyer, 2010b, p. 4).

In particular, the Stanford group’s cross-national studies of nineteenth and twentieth century educational policies, institutions, and practices showed that during that time the state educational “system became a sensible, and even imperative, organizational undertaking because it was broadly legitimated by the dominant model of a national society” (Francisco O. Ramirez & Boli, 1987, p. 9). What is more, the education-state became the norm, regardless of political orientation or economic capacity (J. W. Meyer et al., 1992, p. 146) because “nation-states are more isomorphic than most theories would predict and change more uniformly than is commonly recognized” (Meyer et al., 1997, p. 173; see also Albert, 2008; Bartelson, 2000; Krücken & Drori, 2009).

Meyer’s research and theorizing is grounded in quantitative methodologies but relies on a constructivist epistemology. This allows him to argue that “the great changes of our period—often poorly recognized by realist social sciences—occur much more through waves of conforming non-decision than through networks of fully formed and autonomous rationalized actors” (2008, p. 805). However, one of the more significant “conforming non-decisions” (practice arrangements) is the enactment of a highly standardized “universalistic individualism” (Boli et al., 1985, p. 156) that is embedded in the culture of world society. This individualism is enacted in multiple organizational arrangements. This includes nation-state and associated institutions, persons and peoples, and discursive practices around human identity (J. W. Meyer et al., 1997, pp. 150–151).

Meyer et al.’s (1997) quantitative research is helpful in substantiating the widespread dispersal of blueprints for organizational practices that are “highly rational, articulated, and often surprisingly consensual” (p. 145). Such a conclusion thickens out
the findings of cultural theorists like Miller and Rose (1988), but instead of attending to
texts and discourse, Meyer and colleagues interrogate large amounts of empirical data
(Krücken & Drori, 2009, p. 23) and serve as a model for how educationalists—especially
those who have taken the practice turn—might engage their subjects using more
quantitative methods (see McWilliam & Lee, 2006). The concern for longitudinal cross-
national data arises out of Meyer’s understanding that there are three main actors:
individuals, organizations, and nation states. If we want to understand what organizations
and actors are doing we have to pay attention not only to what they say about themselves,
but also to the records they keep. Further, as already noted, while neo-Foucualtians are
helpful at exploring the genealogy of antagonisms WST helps us to appreciate the more
cooperative aspects of social ecologies.

Following Durkheim, the Stanford group understands modernity as a
displacement of agentic powers from family, family-units, religious groups, and
governments to new institutions like nation-state, obligatory education, and banking.
These new institutions are both a consequence of and carrier for the devolution of
agency. Further, existing older institutions, if they are going to maintain a place in
culture, become more institutionalized, taking on the structuration and scripts that
legitimate the new institutions. The practice approach would accept the findings of WST
researchers: nation-states—as conglomerations of practices—enact and are instantiated
through obligatory education just as earlier monarchic-states enacted and were
instantiated through courts, aristocrats, and ambassadors, without attributing such
accomplishments to devolution of agency.
There has been some uptake of theories of practice by neo-institutionalists (see Powell & DiMaggio, 1991) but “despite the power of their analysis, however, relatively little work has taken up its call” (Lawrence, Suddaby, & Leca, 2009, p. 5). On the other hand, practice theorists do not need to rely on Durkheim’s devolution of agency thesis to consider organizations and nation-states as actors.

Another point needs to be repeated. The term, autonomous individual, however useful it is, exists in multiple, sometimes contradictory grammatical states: as heuristic, as social fact, as ideology, or as discursive practice. The term does not capture all that there is to say about the development of the person in education or in developmental psychology, but it is useful because 1) it is an established term and has both proponents and detractors, and 2) it allow us to get a feel for certain dominant practice-arrangements common to contemporary obligatory education. Taking the practice approach to autonomous individualism permits me to work outside the existing discursive project in educational philosophy and developmental psychology and instead engage with the autonomous individual as experienced by teachers and students who are impacted by world society. The autonomous individual does not just appear as a consequence of the psy-complex nor is our only possible relation to autonomous individualism antagonistic.

I’m not writing against the practice arrangement of autonomous individual, rather I’m critiquing and resisting educational practices that require or enact the autonomous individual as the end of education. My dissertation entails showing that the autonomous individual is persistent, pervasive, and problematic in contemporary obligatory education. However, educationalists don’t have to dispense with developmental science to engage those problems. Instead, educationalists can take a practice approach to human
development; an ecological approach that regards development as the ongoing negotiation and organization of continuity and change. I will explain such a perspective in more detail in the next chapter. In the remainder of this chapter I rehearse the emergence of the autonomous individual as part of the learning society and then show the problem with such a connection.

The Rise of Obligatory Education

Over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, compulsory mass public education developed as one of the main institutions of modern nation-states. As stated earlier, compulsory public education was designed to serve the nation-states in a number of ways, including: inculcating national identity; preparing boys for the military and civil service; developing children for the economic, scientific, and technical progress of the nation; aligning children to the political system; warehousing children who had been taken out of the labour market; and assimilating children (and their families) into the metropolitan culture of the particular nation-state. However, in order to achieve these things, mass education (at least in the Anglo-European “world”) had to focus “on the individual as chooser and actor” (Boli et al., 1985, p. 157) and in so doing fashioned a kind of mass-produced individualism. Over the course of the twentieth century, the mass-produced individual in intra-action with obligatory education, and the nation-state has come to be enacted as compulsory autonomous individualism where the person has to choose, cannot choose not to choose, because the whole market edifice would collapse if the choices were not made, or were made in irrational ways, or rather if the choices were made in accordance with a rationality which was not that of the market. Hence the compulsion which Peters and Marshall (1996) detect in the role of the autonomous chooser: where liberty depends on the market, and the market depends on individual choices then refusal to choose is a refusal of liberty—and when the market is conceptually expanded to cover all forms of
social institution including government then such a refusal amounts to treason (Devine & Irwin, 2005, p. 324).

The Educational State

It is easy to forget that nineteenth century Europe experienced great upheaval in politics and other technologies. Even as it was going through a second significant phase of maritime colonization it was also engaged in almost constant war and revolution. It is in this time that a particular geo-political construct is taking hold: the nation-state. While it is not obvious at the beginning that democracy would become one of the dominant forms of government for the emerging nation-states, one institution that emerged almost simultaneously with the nation-state was compulsory state education.

Curtis (1988) has argued that Anglo-European nation-states could be construed as “educational states,” whose legitimacy depended on the widespread availability of compulsory state-funded schooling where one of the main accomplishments of that education was to promote and support national identity. From the very beginning the educational state was interpellating the person into a new kind of subject (see Althusser, 1984): a subject that could be assimilated into the nation-state (El Atia, 2008; Rush, 1786; S. E. Simons, 1901; D. G. Smith, 2001). The educational state was a part of the establishment of the urban over the rural (Corbett, 2001; Weber, 1976) and of Anglo-Europe over the rest of the world (Anderson, 2006; Ferry, 1897; Fiala & Lanford, 1987; Soysal & Strang, 1989).

In these educational states, “the ‘schoolchild’ [was], by definition, a flawed entity in need of discipline and training, an incomplete social subject which must submit to the process of schooling for its ‘own’ good” (Curtis, 1988, p. 17). But the good of the child was not in isolation from the good of the nation. The ideology and administration of
schools helped “to construct citizenship as the primary political status across the lines of class, regional, ethnic, and gender differences” (Soysal & Strang, 1989, p. 279). On the other hand, the character of mass education brought “the entire population under the aegis of the state as members of the national polity and [prepared] them to undertake the roles necessary to enhance the external power of the state. In this context, education becomes a duty as much as a right” (Soysal & Strang, 1989, p. 279).

Writing at the beginning of the twentieth century, Sarah Simons (1902), in her expansive report on the assimilation of the American “Indian” writes:

During the greater part of the nineteenth century the United States has played the part of guardian to her ward, the Indian, whom she has considered weak and incapable of self-support. The natural result of this policy has been the degeneration of the red man. Happily the United States awoke to the realization of this fact some twenty-five years ago, and since then she has been making efforts to civilize and assimilate the Indian. The aim of the government is now to kindle in the Indian the desire for civilization, and then to make that civilization as easy of adoption as possible. The facts of today certainly give us some ground for encouragement.

The first Indian appropriation by Congress was made in 1877. It was $20,000. Now a large yearly appropriation is made ($2,638,390 in 1899). At present there are in the United States 148 boarding schools and 295 day schools, educating 24,004 Indian children. The purpose of the schools is to give an industrial education which will fit the Indian for his economic struggle in life. Efforts are made not only to educate the children, but the work includes adults, too, and *invades* the home . . . (p. 549; emphasis added).

Over time, the modern practice arrangement of nation-state and with it obligatory education spread throughout the world, not just through colonial and economic impulses, but also through diffusion of universalistic and rationalistic scripts of meaning and legitimacy. The expansion and spread of the educational state in Europe and the rest of the world cannot be explained reductively. It is not just an accomplishment of metropolitan/colonial oppression and greed but also an accomplishment of the enactment of enlightenment ideals that regarded the spread of the enlightenment through education
as the way to emancipate peoples from exploitative relations like feudalism and slavery and the best way to overcome ignorance, war, famine and disease.

These factors are apparent in the rise of the educational state despite the fact that there are two different trajectories. On the European continent, the development of obligatory education was highly centralized while in Great Britain and in her colonies, mass public education was the accomplishment of competing interests (see Halls, 1976). Great Britain did not really have any significant federal legislation effecting curriculum and outcomes until Thatcher’s Education Reform Act of 1988. On the other hand, Napoleon (as Emperor in 1802) and then Jules Ferry (as education minister in 1881 and 1882) set out major federal legislation that continued to shape French education well into the 1970s (see Halls, 1976; Moody, 1978). Napoleon is reported to have written,

there will be no political stability, if there is not one body of teaching with stable fixed principles. As long as we don’t learn in childhood whether we must be republican or monarchist, catholic or irreligious, the State won’t form a Nation. It will be built on vague and uncertain grounds; it will be constantly exposed to disorder and change (in a letter to a friend, as cited in Liard, 1894, p. 70. El Atia, 2008, p. 145).

Napoleon and Ferry were invested in compulsory state-education not only because of the desire to make France’s children Parisian but also because compulsory education was part of an arms race between Prussia and France. While “the embodiment

42It is noteworthy that when the patently Eurocentric Ferry was Prime Minister, France underwent a rapid period of overseas colonization.

43After the 1968 riots, there has been much upheaval in French education. At the same time, on a larger level, France’s current response to Muslim dress in public spaces is a direct reflection of Ferry’s making laicism a central tenant of French Education and society.
of nationalism in education was frustrated in France by the frequent swings between revolution and reaction that occurred between 1815 and 1870,” her defeat by a Prussia in the quick victory of 1871 propelled France to develop a “genuine national system of mass education” (Francisco O. Ramirez & Boli, 1987, p. 8). There was no attempt to hide the fact that a curriculum devoted to literacy and numeracy and a structure based on regimentation and rank was designed to prepare middle class boys to take their place as dependable clerks and patriotic soldiers in the nineteenth century continental wars (see Barnard, 1969; Halls, 1976). As such, continental state-education saw constant “improvements” that were developed and copied as with so many other military advances.

While there was no centrally led move in Great Britain and her colonies towards compulsory state education, that did not mean that education was less important. In the Anglo-American countries, it wasn’t emperors and federal ministers that designed compulsory education; rather it arose out of a series of compromises at local and regional levels between competing school promoters who were quite divided on foundational, process, and structural issues. In Canada, these compromises included a separate school system and different sets of goals for not only for Quebec but for each of the provinces. In the west of Canada, the school promoters set about using education as part of the colonization process for the “empty” territories. This included an enforced Anglification that went beyond language and resulted in the debacle of Canada’s residential school system. This use of compulsory state education as a tool of colonization and assimilation could also be observed in the rest of Great Britain’s colonies (and former colonies like the U.S.A.) (see Curtis, 1988).
In rendering children as state-subjects, mass-education not only produced students but also set the stage for individualism. Mass education has always, been a highly institutional and ideological business. It is not simply an accidental by-product of social changes that happened to occur in one or another locality. Both the differentiating and the integrating aspects of the modern system were pursued as rationalizing projects by all sorts of elites mobilizing their societies for improvement. The political, economic, and cultural aspects of individualism were inherent in these projects and eagerly pursued by mobilizing elites, and it is individualism that gave rise to visions of the necessity of mass education. Of course, it is precisely this project-oriented, or ideological, character of the institutions of individualism that generates the great gulf between doctrine and reality [or discursive and actual practice] (Boli et al., 1985, p. 157).

Even when nineteenth century Prussian, French, and Anglo elites were investing in and investigating compulsory public education as a means to maintain or extend military, economic, or technical superiority over the other, they were doing so by encouraging individualism. The elites in these educational states came to believe that in order for their goals to be achieved, students had to be taught that they had an unmediated and personal responsibility for the pace and quality of progress in their state. We can hear this in Benjamin Rush (1786), one of America’s signatories to the Declaration of Independence. I quote at length:

The business of education has acquired a new complexion by the independence of our country. . . .

The principle of patriotism stands in need of the reinforcement of prejudice, and it is well known that our strongest prejudices in favor of our country are formed in the first one and twenty years of our lives. . . .

. . . while our citizens are composed of the natives of so many different kingdoms in Europe. Our schools of learning, by producing one general and uniform system

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44I take these categories from Payne (1876), who alludes to a newspaper discussion arguing for a more rigorous commitment to “educational science” lest England fall behind France, Germany, and America in military, economic, and technical matters.
of education, will render the mass of the people more homogeneous and thereby fit them more easily for uniform and peaceable government. . . .

Let our pupil be taught that he does not belong to himself, but that he is public property. Let him be taught to love his family, but let him be taught at the same time that he must forsake and even forget them when the welfare of his country requires it. . . .

He must be taught to amass wealth, but it must be only to increase his power of contributing to the wants and demands of the state. He must be indulged occasionally in amusements, but he must be taught that study and business should be his principal pursuits in life. Above all he must love life and endeavor to acquire as many of its conveniences as possible by industry and economy, but he must be taught that this life “is not his own” when the safety of his country requires it.

The Learning Society

While students in educational states were to be constructed as persons with individual responsibility to the state, over the course of the twentieth century a learning society has emerged where nation-states and their institutions are legitimated by participating in educational practices directed towards “the effort to create properly socialized members of the rational society who have the capacity and disposition to join in the struggle for progress as workers, innovators, consumers, organizers, and committed members of the [globalized] political community” (Boli et al., 1985, p. 158). As such, students are expected to enact highly standardized individualism (J. W. Meyer & Jepperson, 2009). But it is not just education that is directed toward highly standardized individualism in this learning society. In this “technicized world system” education displaces “families and other primordial or corporate groups” (including the nation-state) in defining, training, and supporting legitimate action “undertaken by responsible and rational individuals” (Boli-Bennett & Meyer, 1978, p. 799) so that “mass education accompanies not differentiation per se but universalistic individualism” (Boli, Ramirez, Myer 1985, 156).
Using cross-national longitudinal studies, Meyer et al. (1992) have shown that contemporary nation-states enact obligatory education whether or not such is in their ideological or economic interest. The term enactment is important here. While the various ideological and economic interests may treat education as a contested space, from a global and long-term perspective the significance of the contestation becomes muted as the overall trend in education is towards practices of institutional isomorphism even when there are deep ideological or economic differences. This is not to say that there aren’t certain regimes that benefit and even encourage practices leading to isomorphism. For instance, factory owners benefitted from the transition towards age stratification that has now become almost universal in obligatory education. However, factory owners were not the cause for the development of such practices. Further, while the factory model is not apparently well-suited for training either captains of industry or Marxist resistance, neither private schools of capitalist elite nor the Marxist experiments in education can give up age-related grades without risking legitimacy.

Meyer’s point is that such institutional isomorphism is cultural. Countries that take up nation-statehood and make education obligatory and structure education around K-12 are embedded in a world society that is enacted as instrumental culture. As such, world society permits strongly isomorphic institutions like education to co-exist with local expressive forms of culture. For instance, the historical arrangement of the British monarchy may keep their expressive elements, but only as they align with and contribute to world society. The instrumentalized culture of world society, in its current manifestation, is characterized by certain kinds of organizational practices that require its members to act as if the fully developed person is the autonomous individual. Again,
from a practice perspective, such requirements are both enabling and constraining and they aren’t always discursive. That is, educationalists may resist autonomous individualism ideologically even as they enact the instrumental practices that make autonomous individualism seem necessary.

In world society, institution building does not depend on compulsion or conflict. Nor does it necessarily need competition or even strategic cooperation. Rather, at the level of world society, transnational institution building happens most in practice-arrangements that WST names as diffusion and consolidation (see G. S Drori, 2008). Accordingly, education’s ties to national identity have been mixed with discourse around “principles of a universal humanity and a promise of progress that seem to transcend the nation” (M. Simons & Masschelein, 2006, p. 423). Which means that in the context of an expanding world society, the education-state is being displaced. The spread of mass schooling is no longer dependent on what it does for the nation, but what it does for the self-directed autonomous learner. This is not to say the nation-state has been replaced: it persists but in a very different form. Speaking particularly of Sweden, Hultqvist (2004) reports, “the Nation . . . has become decentralized, and it is the figure of the flexible, autonomous, and self-reliant individual that now embodies the Nation. The autonomous individual is just another name for the Nation” (pp. 176-177). In examining current “government reports, curricula, educational research, and pedagogy” pertaining to the “child’s Bildungs journey”, Hultqvist (2001) concludes that,

the free subject in the present school development . . . does not have its reference point in the pupil’s so-called natural leanings. Rather than being the author of him- or herself then, the free child is the end product of a long chain of interventions that constitute the new technologies of governing. These technologies provide links between a variety of measure, ranging from a decentralized and goal-governed school system, new forms of curricular and
evaluation, as well as new paradigms of knowledge and pedagogy, to all those minor technical inventions and tools that are used in today’s Swedish schools to promote the free and autonomous child (p. 148).

Where once mass education served the modern European nation-state by producing national/colonial subjects, now education’s raison d’être is producing world society actors endowed with personal autonomy (Bouissou & Tap, 1998). The script or cultural scheme of personal autonomy is given power in world society because modern actor/subjects have attained, at least in part, through the rise of the education-state, “greater reality and standing, and more functions and responsibilities—they are now agents of higher principles, and hence highly legitimated in ways unique to modern Western culture” (J. W. Meyer & Jepperson, 2009, p. 117).

The individualism of world society encourages “individuals to be completely autonomous and uncontrolled” and “it encompasses the rise and legitimation of models of society in which the individual is seen as a central constitutive element: the sovereign source of public life—political, economic, social, and cultural—and the source of problems in these areas” (Frank et al., 1995, p. 360). Consequently, compulsory public education that produces autonomous individuals (rather than national subjects) perpetuates its existence, and schooling becomes one of the favoured technologies, or practice-arrangements, for affirming if not attaining personal autonomy (Frank O. Ramirez, 2003, p. 242).

This is not to say that contemporary education is univocally oriented towards the learning society and autonomous individualism. After all, “the number of vestigial organs

45While WST, and with it, the autonomous individual emerged out of conditions at play among a number of nineteenth century Anglo-European countries, I don’t think it is helpful to think of the enactment of world society or the autonomous individual as Western. The autonomous individual is always local, both in expressive and functional ways (see Giridharadas, 2011)
[persistent practices] in the educational body is unusually high” (Stone, 1969, p. 71).

Further, twentieth century education has been highly contested, with progressive, critical-emancipatory, transformational, post-structural, and non-oppressive all playing their part to resist the status quo; while the reactionary movements in contemporary education: neo-liberal, neo-conservative, and religious populist are constantly battling to reform education according to their own ideals (see Apple, 2006). Each of these movements has taken various positions (often without awareness) in invoking, promoting, enacting, and resisting autonomous individualism in education (McLeod, 2001).

The Problem

In the Enlightenment it was argued that we could distinguish education from socialisation with the help of the idea of rational autonomy which was considered to be a universal potential of all human beings that could help them to make themselves independent from tradition. The critique of philosophical humanism has shown why rational autonomy should no longer be understood as itself beyond tradition. As a result education for rational autonomy becomes another form of socialization (Biesta, 2007, p. 25).

When the full development of the human personality is directed toward the autonomous individual, a form of neo-colonialism emerges that disrupts the commons and pathologizes students who come from families or cultures that do not practice the autonomous individual as full development of the person. As we have seen, autonomous individualism is rationalized through a certain kind of developmental psychology that is pervasive in world society and is associated with Anglo-European enlightenment (see Sampson, 1988). This folk psychology regards development as diachronic (advancing through time) and culminating in subjectivities that think, feel, and act by themselves and for themselves and are not subject to anyone else’s will or influence or even to their own “undesirable” impulses like irrationality, emotionalism, or compulsion (see M. E.
Bratman, 2001). For many proponents, it is expected that the autonomous individual will freely choose to act altruistically and work in association with others (Waterman, 2005); in these terms, one of the chief aims of educational psychology is to help the individual student be autonomous by freeing it from primordial orderings like embodiment, family, religion, and even the state (see Dearden, 1972; Hagen, 2007; Kant, 2005; Schinkel et al., 2010). However, as we will see, researchers like Martin and MacLellan (2013) have found that much educational psychology contributes to an imbalance of personal over social goals and that such imbalance tends to result in a neocolonial subject who is as likely to conform to consumer capitalism as it is to care for others and the environment (see Popkewitz, Olsson, & Petersson, 2006).

**Imbalance of Personal over Social Goals**

Martin and McLellan have shown that autonomous individualism is prevalent in Canada’s provincial educational practices and curricula despite the criticisms and educational mission statements that would seem to resist autonomous individualism:

> Changing conceptions of the self in school curricula, drawn from psychological theory and research, have increasingly merged the interests, skills, and abilities of the autonomous self with the production of the responsible citizen. The result has been the celebration of the autonomous, self-governing individual at the expense of the socially dependent, committed citizen (A.-M. McLellan & Martin, 2005, p. 85).

Martin & McLellan’s findings are in line with the findings of WST:

the impact of psychological discourses around practices on the education of students in the United States and Canada has to date not been one of harmonizing the social and personal goals of schooling. During the period from 1950 to 2000 in particular, rather than helping to produce citizens and persons capable of contributing to the development and transformation of their communities and themselves in socially productive ways, psychological discourses, methods, and practices in schools have championed highly individualistic, inward-looking forms of self-hood that have helped make many students increasingly expressive, strategic, and entrepreneurial in pursuit of their own self-interest (p. 15).

More succinctly, the practice-arrangement of psychoeducation tends to produce a “hybrid managerial-expressive self” that lacks the resources “to integrate personal and societal demands of schooling with respect to the formation of selves as communal agents” (p. 58). They argue that the evidence given for psychologisms like self-concept, self-esteem, self-respect, self-efficacy, and self-regulation are more tautological than empirical and yet they pervade educational psychology and are deployed throughout the educational system (See Danziger, 1990, 2000, Hacking, 2004, 2004 for more on psychology and science). These technologies of the self-produce triple-e (expressive, entitled, enterprising) students (p. 13) that correspond to the autonomous individual of WST.

Further, strategies and programs designed to effect the students in these self-areas are expected to automatically impact “respect for others, cooperation, and general social concern and responsibility” (p. 156) despite the lack of any evidence supporting such an outcome (see Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger, & Vohs, 2005 for more on the myth of self-esteem).

Martin and McLellan’s work is part of a critical history of the psy-complex:

The psy hypothesis is the assertion that many of the disciplines and professions bearing the prefix psy, but especially psychology, are powerful technologies of the self that, especially in Western societies, have elevated and emphasized our everyday individuality in ways amenable to its management, both by individuals themselves and by others. By individualizing humans through measuring their
capacities, classifying them on the basis of such calibrations, and inscribing and recording their attributes, deficiencies, individuality, and variability, disciplinary psychology has emerged as an influential technology of the self in Western societies (Martin & McLellan, 2013, p. 9).

It must be noted that according to Rose (1996), the psych-complex does not require that the notion of the autonomous individual or any other psychological model be “imposed or adopted in a totalitarian manner” (p. 59), however Martin (2006b) argues that in educational psychology, individualism is not so much promoted as assumed or practiced: “the methodologies and interventions associated with both humanistic and scientific conceptions of self are individualistic, as psychology itself is concerned primarily with individual experience and action.” This psychological individualism, endorsed as it is by professional training and associations, brings “together humanistic, Romantic, and scientific, Enlightenment conceptions of selfhood” which are assumed to be essential human nature and a requirement of a fully functioning adult. It is the work of educationalists “to reconcile tensions between self-control and self-fulfillment while simultaneously reconciling conflicts between institutional, societal mandates for student learning and achievement and demands for personal development from students, parents, and an increasingly psychologically-minded public” (p. 311).

Set as it is in the Anglo-European cultural scheme, western folk psychologies of human development understand the history of the person as linear progress and instrumentalizes things like attachment, play, and child-rearing (see Baker & Heyning, 2004; Burman, 1994; Ramaekers & Suissa, 2013; Romesburg, 2008; Vadeboncoeur, 1997; Walkerdine, 1993; S. White, 1996). Accordingly, developmental psychology often operates with a normative and impoverished form of the family that places too much
emphasis on “one-to-one relationship between parent (mostly the mother) and child” (Ramaekers & Suissa, 2013, p. 80). Such a perspective is, not natural and universal, but extremely specific and, in its specificity, occludes other marginalized stories, subsumed as they are within the bigger story. The big story is a European patriarchal story, a story from the centre which describes the periphery in terms of the abnormal, difference as deficiency (Walkerdine, 1993, p. 455).

One of the central practice arrangements in the European patriarchal story is subjectification which “is central in the way that the ‘psy’ complex is typically defined” (Hollway, 2006, p. 443). And this is a warning for me in this project. The question is more than, “Can educators work towards the full development of the human personality without invoking the autonomous individual?” It is also, “Can they do so without participating in the psy-complex?”

**Cosmopolitan Neo-Colonialism**

Cosmopolitanism is an historical ‘tool’ to consider the transmogrifications of European Enlightenment images of a universal reason, rationality and progress as a mode of living inscribed in the Learning Society. The learner of this new society is a cosmopolitan guided by compassion for continual change and innovation. It is a consuming project of life that regulates the present in the name of the future action (Popkewitz et al., 2006, p. 432).

From the beginning, the education-state has seen the family—especially indigenous and diasporic families—as an obstacle to social progress (Lasch, 1977, p. 13). On the other hand, as guardians of the best interests of their children, parents have resisted mass compulsory education at a number of levels. Parents have resisted the aims of education (homogenization around a particular national identity); a particular curriculum (inappropriate direction or level of challenge for my child); pedagogical methods (my child doesn’t learn that way); and even particular teachers (they have it in for my child). Often, parents who resist the dictates of state education believe they are in
a better place than the educationalists to know what are the best interests of the child, and
despite Gutmann (1980, p. 8), parents do not need to believe in something like child
ownership in order to resist the state in the interests of the children in their care.

Education when directed towards the autonomous individual can continue to be a
form of colonialism. Popkewitz et al. (2006) have demonstrated that the “assemblage in
which reason is related to notions of agency and progress, stability and consensus as
governing principles of action and reflection” is a form of neo-colonialism made up of
“the agential individual who is talked about as empowered, having a voice, and self-
responsible in producing innovation in the processes of change” (p. 434). While some of
the violence and bigotry associated with the colonialism of the educational state is no
longer apparent, the learning society of the twentieth century and beyond still operates
with “universalized notions of progress and justice” and is made up of “rationalized
organizations and associations” that are “composed of autonomous, rational, and
purposive individual citizens.” As such, the learning society “implies the integrated
functioning of these elements so that collective goods are enhanced by individual and
organizational progress and contribute to such progress (Strang & Meyer, 1993, p. 501).
Further, “since legitimate action is that undertaken by responsible and rational individuals
rather than by families and other primordial or corporate groups” (Boli-Bennett & Meyer,
1978, p. 799), any resistance from parents is construed as a threat to the development of
the child’s personal autonomy and her/his capacity to contribute to the fully liberal
democratic state. This certainly seems to be what is happening in Britain and a number of
other jurisdictions that are insisting that the inculcation of any other values than liberal
democratic values are inappropriate for public education (see Burtonwood, 2000; Fernández & Sundström, 2011; Schinkel, 2010).

Callan, a proponent of the liberal democratic state, helps us to draw out ambivalence in the discourse around autonomous individualism in education:

The convergence of political liberalism and deliberative democracy on this point yields a paradoxical conclusion. An education intended to promote robust mutual respect in conditions of deep diversity must substantially limit that diversity by militating against ways of life (including otherwise laudable ways of life) that are repugnant to personal autonomy. That conclusion is apt to be unwelcome to many friends of diversity, who will seek a less homogenizing ideal of social cooperation with concomitantly more inclusive conceptions of citizenship and civic education. Multiculturalists such as Parekh (2000) regard liberal partiality to autonomy as but another example of western ethnocentrism (pp. 109–11) (Callan, 2004, p. 77).

Whereas once it was the development of a particular national identity that justified the educational state in rejecting resistant parents as primitive, backwards, and even deviant, now the learning society insists that all parents who resist or opt out of the learning society are construed as illiberal, parochial, and even dangerous; and this is happening at the same time that many Anglo-European nations and settler countries have apologized for their use of education for assimilation.

The colonizing aspects of compulsory public education can also be noticed by the way that parents of privilege tend to find ways to opt out of mass education. In some jurisdictions, “the importance of public education in equalizing the profound injustices of contemporary American society is increasingly downplayed in favor of discourse about self-interest and the rigid feelings of resentment that undergird them” (McCarthy & Dimitriadis, 2000, p. 200). Where a neoliberal ethos pervades, parents of privilege have been trying to invoke their rights as autonomous consumers to insist that they be able to choose the best educational setting for their children (Marshall, 1996b). In such cases, parental capacity to invoke autonomy is dependent not only on the neoliberal ethos in the
pertinent jurisdiction, but also upon the parent’s own relative privilege. We should not be 
surprised that parents from marginalized groups have a harder time invoking such 
privilege or accessing these kind of educational options for their children. Compensatory 
or emancipatory education oriented towards the autonomous individualism cannot escape 
these non-coherences. If the student is autonomous only to the degree that they are able to 
choose within some sort of purportedly universal rational moral value (whether Kantian 
or otherwise), then it seems as if Foucault’s criticisms of freedom pertains. Marshall 
explains:

Within education the development of the rationally autonomous person is almost 
a given (though see Lankshear, 1982). However this does not bring freedom, 
Foucault argues, but a particular form of domination; subjects are subjected (on 
deliberate ambiguities such as these Foucault, perhaps, follows Lacan). In 
particular, whilst believing themselves to be rationally autonomous, subjects are 
governable, that is, they lead docile, useful and practical lives (Foucault, 1979a,b) 

With cosmopolitanism, educational credentials become one of the most accessible 
processes that allow people to act as leaders and consultants in the nation-state. And this 
is where we start to hear echoes of the “white man’s burden” to bring Enlightenment and 
freedom to the rest of the world. But it is now the burden of the “intelligentsia” to bring 
cosmopolitan ideals in the name of freedom from oppression. The intelligentsia 
legitimate the processes and ends that have made them what they are (Hollinger, 1975) 
and require of others “the expectation that human beings will be best understood in terms 
of individual autonomy, bound not to the mediate structure of communities and their 
interests but to the sure ground of transcendent principles that determine truth and 
goodness regardless of diversity” (Pratt, 2003, p. 595). In the modern cosmopolitan 
project, those transcendent principles are articulated “as the development of a single 
process framed by a single origin or a single end . . . under the aspect of a larger story of
progress away from the given starting point or toward the given end” and any persons or people who do not take up that discourse “will be less significant” than those who are further on “toward the given end” (Pratt, 2003, p. 596; see also Law, 2011c).

Niezen puts it plain: “The idea of a cosmopolitan intelligentsia possessing the only legitimate way to transcend the power interests in social knowledge is not an attractive solution to many of those who see themselves as oppressed colonial subjects” (2009, p. 4). More pointedly, Dirlik (1999) reveals that in the current cultural scheme, “it is a new generation of Third Worlders, firmly established in the structures of Eurocentric power, who now speak for the societies from which they hail, while those back at home are condemned to inaudibility—or Parochialism” (1999, p. 26). Niezen, Dirlik, and others who resist the intelligentsia of the learning society cannot be dismissed as illiberal parochialists trying to hold onto bigotry and prejudice; the resistance is more about the lack of space that the learning society has for alternate rationalities (Popkewitz et al., 2006). If it is true that even though “the educational models may celebrate multiple intelligences, the achievements of indigenous peoples, and even diverse paths to national development,” nonetheless, “the individual and collective effort to cultivate intelligence and achievement has a strong educational flavor and is strongly linked to a world model of progress and justice” (J. W. Meyer & Ramirez, 2009, p. 218), then it follows that, “if everyone’s rationality is the same . . . then any exercise of free will deviating from the dictates of rationality must be mistaken” (Garrison, 1998, p. 111). This means that the fallen, the irrational, the primitive, the parochial must be “governed in the name of a cosmopolitan ideal which despite its universal pretensions embodies particular inclusions and exclusions” (M. Simons & Masschelein, 2006, p. 423). Just because the inculcation
and performance of the autonomous individual is not enforced by nation-states does not mean that such rationalization is not a variation of Anglo-Eurocentric hegemony. In the learning society the autonomous cosmopolitan subject has a double responsibility. There is responsibility for one’s own life-style and for creating an environment, supportive for learning and for the security and health of everybody, including one’s self. But those images and narratives of the social and the individual are also divisions that place some as outside its cultural mapping: uncivilized, barbaric and outside the pale of humanness (Popkewitz et al., 2006, p. 446).

Before I go on to the next section, I want to flag something for the reader. The previous two sections on the imbalance of personal and social goals and cosmopolitan neo-colonialism derive largely from situated empirical research. This section coming up on consumer capitalism is writ large and interacts with interpretations that are more genealogical. Finally, a reminder for myself as much as for my reader: all of the entities that I am talking about here are practice-arrangements. They are not over-arching or under-girding structures. Something like consumer capitalism is a structured structuring that carries and is carried by people and things. True, capitalism can be studied as an epistemic object, but epistemic objects are a recursive accomplishment of sociomaterial practices rather than the cause behind those practices. Let me take a moment to clarify the terms that I have been using and will be using. We live in a world society as an existing arrangement of structuring practices and relationships (institutions) that are accomplished by nation-states and other entities at a world level. The spread of mass education as a right and a responsibility is but one example of this. Cosmopolitanism is an aspiration to live in a certain kind of world society. Cosmopolitanism is an ideology and has both planners and promoters which together can be referred to as intelligentsia. I use neo-colonialism to refer to the spread of ideologies, including cosmopolitanism, and other
significant practice-arrangements without the (apparent) necessity of repressive violence or obvious dependence on other state mechanisms. Global capitalism and the world banking system are indications of both world society and examples of neo-colonialism. As we will see, consumer capitalism is one kind of capitalism. It probably couldn’t exist without global capitalism and can be considered as an especially virulent form of neo-colonialism. Though both global capitalism and consumer capitalism are a pervasive part of world society, many of the cosmopolitan intelligentsia are disapproving of such a state of affairs even as they are not entirely free to escape from the models under critique.

**Consumer Capitalism**

The ‘autonomous chooser’ is the manifestation of busno-power in its human form. And of course there is an irony in the term because the autonomous chooser is not autonomous: s/he has to choose, cannot choose not to choose, because the whole market edifice would collapse if the choices were not made, or were made in irrational ways, or rather if the choices were made in accordance with a rationality which was not that of the market. Hence the compulsion which Peters and Marshall (1997) detect in the role of the autonomous chooser: where liberty depends on the market, and the market depends on individual choices then refusal to choose is a refusal of liberty—and when the market is conceptually expanded to cover all forms of social institution including government then such a refusal amounts to treason (Devine & Irwin, 2005, p. 324).

In latter stage world society, the cultural imperialism at play is not of a particular monarch or nation, but of certain forms of capitalism. Capitalism is a particular set of economic arrangements that govern the distribution of wealth and its risks. My concern is mainly with consumer capitalism which extracts wealth from consumption more than from production (see Illouz, 2009; Leach, 1993; St. Pierre, 2000). Consumer capitalism depends on underplaying the aesthetic appreciation of making and producing by “focussing exclusively on the consummation phase [promising] to repair alienation through material consumption, thus fuelling an endless circuit of domination through consumerism” (Gherardi, Nicolini, & Strati, 2007, p. 316). In this sense, this notion of
autonomy is part of the wider “capitalist culture industry” which Schwalbe (1993) complains:

profanes the self by using the ritual idiom of individuality to foster insecurity and undermine respect for the selves of others. Unlike an overtly coercive total institution, this industry does not take our identity kits away; rather, it fills them with shlock and kitsch. It thus tries to inflate us even as it impoverishes us by homogenizing what we can say and feel about ourselves. It further profanes the self by denying the reality of the chronic feelings of emptiness that come from staking our worth on commodified images. When we are told that these feelings can be resolved by a makeover, by adopting a fresh image, we are hearing a lie that denies both the reality and sacredness of the self (p. 344).

Education is not immune from such processes and many critics have noted both explicit (see Kenway & Bullen, 2001; Norris, 2011) and implicit (Marshall, 1996a, 1996b) commercialization of mass public education and the way education is implicated in capitalism. One of the reasons that consumer capitalism is able to exploit autonomous individualism is because “behind the primacy of individualism there is a powerful ethic of conformity” (Sarri & Finn, 1992, p. 224). This ethic of conformity is latent in the expectations and design of the school even as it is overtly denied:

Psychological fixes in the forms of psycho-educational programs, interventions, and assessments promote an autonomous self as a consumptive self. Such products tell the individual that she is responsible for making her own happiness and success. And, she can achieve these ends herself, with the right kind of psychological guidance. Self-fulfilment consists in the purchase of convenient self products. Psycho-educational products treat the individual student or teacher as a free-choosing consumer in need of expert psychological assistance (A.-M. T. McLellan, 2008, p. 109).

Consumer capitalism permits people to perform the consumptive self or free-choosing consumer by relating to an abstract brand rather than being in relation with other persons.\footnote{Dr. Pepper, “Always One of a Kind” has built their brand around this irony.}
Consumer capitalism does not just permit/require us to relate abstractly, it subordinates people as autonomous choosers. As consumers educated in calculated choice, we are enabled/required to choose between brands, price, health benefits/risks, environmental impact, and issues of social justice. Even choosing to resist capitalism can be branded: after all, “the main characteristic of modern capitalism is its capacity to digest anything, including its potential sources of subversion” (Nicolini, 2009b, p. 491; see also Hernandez-Reguant, 2008). And while those concerned with fair trade might be contemptuous of those who follow brand fads, that does not mean that their own conformity to fair trade is not in response to a more sophisticated form of branding (see Markkula & Moisander, 2011).

Consumerism pervades the educational setting in all sorts of ways. For instance, there is the common tendency for educators (and guardians) to use increased earning power to motivate students towards performance and persistence. In a highly consumerist society much education only improves upon the capacity and quality of consumerism. McLellan (2008) contends that many “educational practices are devoted to self-advertisement and consumption.” She elaborates:

Psychology’s overarching commitment to the measurement of individual’s skills and abilities in visible, quantifiable ways has contributed much to educators’ understandings of the selves of students as discrete, calculable sets of competencies (see chapter four), that can be developed and enhanced through highly structured instructional activities, programs and practices. The resultant effect has been the promotion of an empirical self that is masterful in all of its acquisitions, but empty. This self is also perpetually focused on comparisons, judgments, and adjustments, which make it well suited to the continual consumption of new and different psycho-educational products. And, the emphasis on personal adjustment or improvement, whether it is to feel better or get better, also implies a need to look to psychological experts for guidance and practice (p. 105).
Over the course of the last 50 years, learning society has helped people to become more capable and sophisticated consumers: we count calories as well as nickels; we weigh the ethics as well as the produce; we research the sources as well as the best value. If students are to be schooled in calculating and weighing their options, then given the connection between autonomous individualism and consumerism, educators need other models of the person that are less likely to be exploited by marketers and less likely to contribute to neo-colonial assimilation of children from families and cultures that are less given to autonomous individualism.

**The Case for Individualism**

There are a number of scholars committed to human flourishing who have made a case for individualism as one of the more important educational goals (see Callan, 2004; Cuypers, 1992; Dearden, 1984). Waterman (1984, 2005), in supporting individualism, argues that many noted twentieth century developmental theorists support a notion of psychological individualism that is consistent with the autonomous chooser of Adam Smith (1969) and Friedrich Hayek (1960). Waterman’s lists include Carl Rogers, Abraham Maslow, Erich From, Rollo May, Jean Piaget, Lawrence Kohlberg, and Erik Erikson.

Based on these and other influences, we should not be surprised that support for autonomous individualism is widespread. Writing at the popular level, Sylwester (2007) supports the autonomous individual though “autonomy is a somewhat nebulous concept about becoming successfully self-directed within cultural constraints” (p. 11). Hill et al. (1998) define autonomy self-referentially as “the right to act as an autonomous agent” and further stipulate that autonomy includes, “right to choice and privacy about that
choice” (p. 104). Kitchener’s (1984) more studied approach supports autonomous individualism at many levels. She claims that, “many philosophers have held that the field of ethics requires the concept of an autonomous person” and goes on to explain that autonomy includes “both freedom of action . . . and freedom of choice.” Kitchener argues (in keeping with WST) that autonomy is “embedded socially in many of our political institutions and the law [and is] embedded in and provides the foundations for many concepts in psychology.” In particular, Kitchener believes that “the right to act as an autonomous agent” and the responsibility to treat other people as autonomous individuals is the moral precedent for “the concepts of unconditional worth and tolerance for individual differences” and the rationale behind professional practices like, right to privacy and informed consent (p. 46).

Critiquing autonomous individualism does not require that concepts of “unconditional worth” and “toleration for individual differences” be abandoned, nor that professionals be unconcerned for client privacy and informed consent. In fact, such critical concepts are poorly coupled with autonomous individualism which is so malleable that it can be used to endorse contradictory ethical projects. Kitchener acknowledges this when she stipulates: “It should be noted that autonomy does not necessarily imply unlimited freedom. People clearly do not have the freedom to infringe on the rights of others, cause them harm, or otherwise deprive them of their autonomy” (Kitchener, 1984, p. 46; emphasis added). However, for much of human history, autonomy has included “the freedom to infringe on the rights of others, cause them harm, or otherwise deprive them of their autonomy.” That is, for much of human history, to
have autonomy implied the power and “right” to subordinate others (see Macpherson, 1964).

In Anglo-European context, it was seventeenth century philosophers like Hobbes and Locke who appear to be the first to connect “the field of ethics” with “the concept of an autonomous person.” At the time, autonomy was associated with the self-possessed individual, and autonomy was derived from owning property rather than being owned or beholden to property owners. Possessive individuals, almost invariably males, appropriated the right to own property, including other persons. Of course, “the possessive individual of seventeenth-century political theory is not the possessive individual of nineteenth-, twentieth-, or twenty-first-century.” One of the main accomplishments of the practice-arrangement, liberal democracy “is a re-conceptualization of the nature of self-possession, in which self-mastery through self-knowledge, through reason and rationality, rather than through property and authority, came to be defining characteristics” (Curtis, 2009, pp. 188–189).

The notion of “self-mastery through self-knowledge” is usually connected with Kant who performed a series of thought experiments on the relation between rational autonomy and morality (Kant, 2005). Kant argued that morality was not found in keeping troth in a hierarchy of relations, but rather morality was universal and abstract and attainable through enlightened human reasoning or Bildung. There continues to be much dispute around Kant’s connection of autonomy to morality, both amongst Kantians (Deligiorgi, 2012) and his detractors (Sidgwick, 1962). Nonetheless, the concept of personal autonomy and self-Bildung has great “traction” in Anglo-European Enlightenment and continues to be part of educational discourse (see Biesta, 2002). With
Bildung, the right to autonomy and to rule others resides not in the reason/word of the propertied, but in those who are in possession of their own reason; anyone who is not under another’s “tutelage” has the right to claim autonomy (Kant, 1996). Those who possess autonomous reason will demonstrate their competence in their enterprises (whether economic or military); they will be Lettered and will not be ruled by their own bodies. A nation-state’s power will not be derived from a royal treasure but from its wealth of knowledge stored in libraries (public and private), museums, archives, in natural history collections, universities, and most important, in literature and numerate citizens.

However, it would be a mistake to over-emphasise the influence of Kant on nineteenth and early twentieth century education promoters, who as we have seen were more concerned with nation-building than with Bildung. For example, an educational philosopher like R. F. Dearden—writing during the time the learning society was still taking shape—tries to avoid an inappropriate universalism by acknowledging that the ideal of “personal autonomy based on reason” and the “agencies and institutions” needed “to support it and to cultivate it,” belong to “a particular social tradition, and one which is not found in every society by any means” (Dearden, 1968, p. 49). But by the eighties—as the autonomous individual has taken hold in learning society—Dearden proclaims that the “development of the individual as an autonomous chooser” is an educational concept that had broad but not yet universal acceptance (Dearden, 1984, p. 43). By the new millennium, the notion of education’s universal responsibility to help children develop as autonomous individuals is invoked in resisting parents who are seen as too ‘parochial’ or ‘illiberal’ (Hagen, 2007; Schinkel et al., 2010). I have been arguing that “the re-
conceptualization of the nature of self-possession, in which self-mastery through selfknowledge, through reason and rationality” (Curtis, 2009, pp. 188–189) is more a consequence of the spread of world society than the resolution of debates in educational philosophy or the accomplishment of research in developmental psychology.

**Fear of Individualism**

There are a number of points I want to make clear. I am not saying that the only contemporary society that exists is world society, nor that every public school produces autonomous individuals. Nor am I saying that autonomous individualism is incongruent with the practice arrangements of all indigenous and diasporic people groups; nor that the only possible outcome of education for autonomous individualism is compliance with consumer capitalism. I am saying that education is a pervasive institution that is shaping our world in a remarkably isomorphic (same shaped) fashion at the national and local level and that one of the major outcomes of that shaping is the fostering of autonomous individualism both at the discursive and the material/formal level. This creates certain problems in relation to cosmopolitan neo-colonialism and consumer capitalism. However these problems can be consciously countered by educators who are concerned that education be more transformative by taking up and supporting practices that lead to the full development of the person without requiring that such a person be an autonomous individual.

At the same time, Meyer insists:

throughout Western history, changes in individualism have been seen as threatening crisis and disorder. We fear alternately that the individual will be overwhelmed by rationalization or that the social order will be exploded by an expression of the untamed aspects of the individual. Both these fears can be calmed by observing that they merely redefine the individual, who subsists through them all. Worries about the explosive individual call for more disciplined
socialization and a more controlled, more useful personality; the fear of the totalitarian or one-dimensional tendency of society results in new conceptions of the self. Threats to individualism are no more than calls for its continuing reconstruction (1986, p. 221).

Using Meyer’s categories of fear of and fear for the individual, I want to revisit the concerns I have outlined above. I am afraid for the strong coupling that can be observed between educating for autonomous individualism and consumer capitalism, and I think that such coupling is underappreciated even by those who resist the presence of consumer capitalism in schools (Kenway & Bullen, 2001; Norris, 2011). Further, consumer capitalism does not present as totalitarian nor as one-dimensional. Consumer capitalism permits persons to practice at least four kinds of consumption: consumption oriented towards getting the best deal; consumption oriented towards health; consumption oriented towards the environment; and consumption oriented towards social justice. All these practices are related to math and research skills that are routinely modeled, practiced, and reinforced in the classroom. While this need not be so, awareness of the problem and having the right motivation will not turn things around.

I am not afraid of the autonomous individual (untamed or otherwise): there are other forces far more powerful than the autonomous individual. Beyond this, there is a sense in which the project I am interested in could end up looking like a reconstruction of a kind of individualism that is not equated with autonomous individualism. If we were to take the relational turn, whether in a hybrid fashion (relational individualism) or as an alternate understanding of persons, we would find recursive processes at work that would open us to new methods.
I am not interested in the eradication of the autonomous individual or of capitalism any more than I’m interested in the eradication of any knowing. What I’m looking for, what I’m presenting is another

discursive resource for: (1) engaging in critical evaluation of cultural practices (including the practices of the human sciences); (2) generating intelligibilities for action—rationales for personal or collective action or policy; (3) altering conversational patterns—as differing forms of language, metaphors, moves in argument, and the like are placed into interchange so do relationships change; and (4) creating images of alternative futures (Gergen, 1996, pp. 13–14).

From the practice perspective, autonomous individualism as ideology is a particular practice-arrangement of Anglo-European Enlightenment culture or world society. While we can identify autonomous individualism as an epistemic object, it is harder to find autonomous individuals. To the extent that people present as autonomous individuals, it is in moments of time rather than an ongoing state. Whether or not we permit admiring a seemingly autonomous achiever like Steve Jobs, we cannot permit that admiration to be matched by contempt for others nor the associated practice arrangements to be used as a measurement for the full development of the human personality.
CHAPTER FIVE: SROUFE’S THEORIZATION OF
THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PERSON

If the field of practices then provides a ‘context’ for both social orders and mind, then practices can be understood as both differentiated from and linked to both. This understanding raises the issue of how these differing aspects of human functioning can be considered together in an account of practice without either a reduction to individualism, or the commonly used equivalent alternative, of a ‘reduction to the social’ (Lancaster, 2012, p. 120).

My dissertation argues that taking a practice perspective on human development would help educators to work towards the full development of the person without entailing the autonomous individual. The practice perspective regards practices as the keystone to the formation of social structures and persons. However, twenty-first century practice theorizing is more invested in explaining the development of the social or cultural than it is in explaining the development of persons. In this chapter I engage with Sroufe’s organizational perspective on the development of the person as a way of filling in the gap. I begin the chapter by laying out an overview of the organizational perspective on the development of persons. This includes a brief history of attachment theory, a focus on *The Minnesota Study of Risk and Adaptation from Birth to Adulthood (Minnesota Study)*, and a presentation of some critiques of the organizational perspective. I then take a practice approach to Sroufe’s organizational perspective. First, I show how it resembles theories of practice and I then conclude the chapter by taking a practice perspective on key terms like attachment and resilience.
Overview of Organizational Perspective

As developmental psychology, the organizational perspective is directed towards “the problem of continuity and change”: though it appears that a person’s early experience—of self, others, and environment—has an impact on later experience, this instinct has been very hard to explain in a way that could be demonstrated empirically (Sroufe, 1986, p. 842). Experimental psychology, whatever its contributions to understanding the ways people think, feel, and behave, has been limited in its ability to provide the tools and rigor to observe behavior of persons in an open system over a life-span (see Jost & Kruglanski, 2002; Gergen, 2002; Potter, 2002; Pratto, 2002). Instead, “scientific apparatuses” and research approaches more conducive to observing meaningful patterns of action were required to study persons as “living, active, interactive, reactive, and adaptive organisms” (Richters, 1997, p. 197). For more than forty years, L. Alan Sroufe has devoted his academic career to such an endeavor.

Sroufe’s theoretical work is grounded in a number of empirical research projects, notably the Minnesota Study. He writes mostly in the area of child development and developmental psychopathology, and though the foundation for much of his work is Bowlby-Ainsworth’s attachment theory, he draws on a wide range of twentieth century developmental theories. Students of developmental psychology will notice amongst other things: Heinz Werner’s (1948) hierarchical view of development; Piaget’s (1952) work on the child’s intentional engagement with the environment and the way that development is qualitatively different over time; Vygotskii’s (1962, 1978) contextualism and his ability to draw out the interrelation between thought and feeling; and the notion of “sensitive period” and “developmental prototype” from René Spitz (1970). This is not
to ignore the contributions of the many co-researchers and critics from within attachment theory, most notably Waters (1977), Cinchetti (1978), Bronfenbrenner (1979) and Sameraff (1989).47

**Attachment Theory**

I give a brief account of attachment theory, since it is at the core of organizational perspective and is one of the things that distinguishes Sroufe’s theory of development from other more linear developmental theories. The central premises of attachment theory are: 1) the quality of care given to infants in their first years is foundation for the development of their psychological health and their social behavior and, 2) children who receive responsive attention and positive affection will be more resilient than children who don’t. Since its early formulation, attachment researchers have been attempting to prove and map these two points (Sroufe, 2005, p. 349).

Attachment is a biologically-anchored bond-relationship between one individual and another. Typically, a person’s first attachment relationships are with primary caregivers, but attachment is much more than the infant’s dependence on the caregiver, and is instead observed within the context of proximity-maintenance in relation to the level and quality of security provided in the relationship (see Sroufe, Fox, & Pancake, 1983, p. 1615). In a secure attachment relationship, proximity-maintenance is mutual, giving the infant a safe place in case of duress as well as confidence to explore when no danger or stress is present.

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47See Sroufe, Egeland, Carlson, & Collins (2005, pp. 31–33) and Vaughn (2005) for an elaboration of the appropriation and incorporation of other developmental theories into the organizational perspective.
Attachment is not in the person, but rather in the patterns of interaction between the infant and the attachment figure. However, research into attachment has consistently found “that sensitive responding to the infant’s communication in the first year was related to secure attachment at 12 months” (Sroufe, 1985, p. 7; see also Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978). The adult caregiver’s capacity for “sensitive responding” depends on a combination of factors including: adequate support and resources for caregiver and baby, baby’s initial temperament and health, adult’s own attachment history, and adult’s awareness that sensitive responding makes a difference. For Sroufe, Attachment refers to the special relationship between infant and caregiver that emerges over the first year of life. Based on their history of interaction, by the time they are 10 or 12 months old virtually all infants form a specific, “preferential” relationship with one or a small number of caregivers. This means that in certain circumstances (for example, when they are distressed) they specifically require contact with this person in order to be readily settled. Likewise, they are more comfortable in novel situations and play more freely when these caregivers are present and attentive, and they reserve their most exuberant greetings for them. They are eager to share positive affective experiences with their caregiver, and they draw support and reassurance from them when they are threatened or stressed. In short, their attachment figure is central in their regulation of emotions (Sroufe, 2000, p. 69).

Attachment figures are not interchangeable; once an infant develops an attachment, the dyadic relationship persists through time and space. If affective-ties diminish with long absences, the infant will experience some loss and may show indications of trauma (see Bowlby, 1982). While attachment figures are not interchangeable, neither are they exclusive; infants may have secure attachment relations with more than one caregiver. Further, the infant attachment relationship provides the patterns and resources for numerous forms of later attachment relationships, including romantic attachments and as adult members of infant attachment relationship.
Obtaining and practicing secure attachment is predictive of social-cognitive competence and characteristics like resiliency, adaptability, and self-reliance. The latter is the counter-intuitive finding of attachment theory: attentive parenting does not produce dependence. To the contrary, people are more likely to practice self-reliance if they learned as infants that they can rely on the attachment figures in their life. Attachment then, is not a trait, nor a temperament, nor a drive; nor is it the same as dependence and should not be equated with the infant-caregiver dyad. Attachment is not the same as imprinting nor is it a static disposition. Rather, attachment is the ongoing organization of the person around affective-ties, and the security and affirmation they engender (see Bergin & Bergin, 2009; Bretherton, 1992; Mercer, 2006; Sroufe & Sampson, 2000; Sroufe & Waters, 1982; Waters, Kondo-Ikemura, Posada, & Richters, 1991).

Attachment theory emerged in the mid-twentieth century and is associated with John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth. Bowlby was trained in Freudian psychoanalysis, but he found that it neither prepared him for, nor helped him work with the real-life trauma that he observed in his work with delinquent children and war-orphans. Bowlby agreed with Freud that there was some congruence between early childhood experience and adult personality, but disagreed with Freud’s depiction of infancy as a kind of pathology: “where Freud saw infants as needy, clingy, and dependent, seeking the mother as a source of drive reduction, Bowlby, in contrast, saw infants as competent, curious, and fully engaged with the environment” (Waters et al., 2002, pp. 234–235). Further, while most contemporary developmental research had “turned up meager correlations between assessments of behavior over time and even across situations at the same time,” Bowlby’s
theorization paved the way for researchers to focus on adaptive processes rather than discrete behaviour (see Sroufe, 1986, p. 842).

While John Bowlby laid the foundation for attachment theory, his particular formulation was marred by a limited empirical basis, a state of constant confrontation with psychoanalysis and object relations theory, an overreliance on the deficiency model, a misapplication of imprinting, and a naïve deployment of cybernetics (see Duniec & Raz, 2011; Zepf, 2006; Sroufe & Waters, 1977). At the same time his fundamental insight that interpersonal relatedness is innately biological has been empirically verified and has proven to be a boon to parents, educators, and others concerned with reducing human suffering and contributing to human flourishing (see Ein-Dor, 2015; Guisinger & Blatt, 1994, p. 106).

Mary Ainsworth developed the Strange Situation Procedure (SSP), a research process for demonstrating and mapping attachment. The SSP, which has become one of the gold standards in assessing attachment relations,

is an observational/investigation procedure based on two assumptions: (1) being placed in a Strange environment, being confronted with an unknown person, and being left behind by the caregiver are stressful circumstances to the child and activate attachment behavior; and (2) the return of the caregiver is sufficient to relieve the stress for children with a secure attachment relationship but not sufficient for those with an insecure one (IJzendoorn, 1990, pp. 4–5).

The SSP is not considered as an experiment, but rather a research apparatus. Ainsworth had started her career doing on-site research in Ugandan and then American homes and had already been able to ascertain that strange situation was not an uncommon occurrence for children and their mothers and held promise as an important marker for attachment (see Ainsworth, 1967). The procedure permitted Ainsworth and her
colleagues to zoom in on the strange situation in multiple attachment relationships in
order to develop a baseline for prospective longitudinal research (see Ainsworth, 1969).

Ainsworth understood attachment theory as a kind of paradigm shift (Kuhn, 1996)48 that explained not only infant attachment but also gave insight into the
“complexity and flexibility of mature attachment behaviour in the human” (Ainsworth, 1969, p. 1009). As noted, in distinction from psychoanalytic theories, attachment
theorists argued that it is attachment and not dependency as drive (see Beller, 1957;
Mahler, 1968) or object relations (see Klein & Riviere, 1989; Winnicott, 1965) that is the
foundation for the development of the person (Ainsworth, 1969, p. 970). In its early
years, attachment theory was thoroughly grounded in ethology. Ethological research
supported attachment theorists in their rejection of the general psychoanalytic depiction
of the passive, narcissistic infant and the insistence on being “critical of views that hold
that interpersonal relations in general and the infant-mother tie in particular are secondary
to orality or to primary drive gratification” (Ainsworth, 1969, p. 980). Ainsworth’s own
ethno-research with human children supported the ethologists’ discovery that attachments
could develop between infants and “familiar persons who play no part in the infant’s
routine care, including feeding” (Ainsworth, 1969, p. 981).

While Bowlby was known for testing “intuitive hunches against available
empirical findings and concepts from related domains” (Bretherton, 1992, p. 771),

48While numerous scholars have sought to understand social sciences in terms of paradigms, these efforts have met with difficulty (Jacob, 1989). Ainsworth et al. admit to a “lack of resemblance to a mathematicophyscial theory,” but the writers still wanted to maintain that “general theory of behavior and Attachment Theory amount to what Kuhn termed a paradigm change for developmental psychology—a complete shift of perspective” (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978, p. 4).
Ainsworth called for an intertheoretical program of research into human development that would be naturalistic, longitudinal, and would allow “mutual accommodation and assimilation among the theoretical models themselves” (1969, p. 1019). Such research promised to confirm attachment theory as a Kuhnian shift. Since Ainsworth’s initial call, there have been a host of longitudinal studies (see Gili S. Drori, Jang, & Meyer, 2006; Klaus E. Grossmann, Grossmann, & Waters, 2005), most notably the Minnesota Study.

**Minnesota Study**

Starting in the mid-1970s and culminating with a major review published in 2005, the Minnesota Study was rooted in Bowlby-Ainsworth attachment theory and used the SSP as one of its baselines. Originally funded as a shorter project (36 months), the Minnesota Study was set up to determine if there were early family indicators for children who might be at risk of abuse or neglect. The researchers selected about 260 prospective mothers and began studying the family and the children from the last trimester. “The study was well cast to assess the impact of early experience, as well as a host of other features of development, because measures were detailed, comprehensive, and densely gathered . . . including eight assessments in the first 18 months” (Sroufe, Coffino, & Carlson, 2010b, p. 37). Before the initial 36-month project had come to a close, it was already apparent that with such a foundation, much more could be done.

Though the initial data would generate reports for years to come, there were some significant unanswered questions and untapped opportunities. Brian Vaughn, a long-term co-researcher on the Minnesota Study, notes that the original study actually failed to provide the predictive framework it was looking for, though there were indicators that the data might be more useful in predicting abuse and neglect in the years to follow. Further,
extending the period of the study would allow for “explicit testing of hypotheses from psycho-social theories of adaptation, including Attachment Theory but also Erikson’s psycho-social development model (e.g., Erikson, 1950) and the temperament framework offered by Thomas and Chess (e.g., Thomas, Chess, & Birch, 1968)” (Vaughn, 2005, p. 370). Grants were obtained, 180 families agreed to continue participation, researchers came and went, and the study continued on, culminating in the publication of *The Development of the Person* (Sroufe et al., 2005).

The study appeared at a crucial time in the history of developmental science and the problem of continuity and change. Social learning theorist, Walter Mischel (1973) argued that since psychologists were unable to demonstrate significant patterns of consistent global personality dispositions in laboratory like conditions the focus should turn from debating the existence of consistency to “study the cognitive and social learning conditions that seem to foster—and to undermine—its occurrence” (p. 259). Meanwhile, many of the studies of attachment at that time were unable to discern stability in infant behavior over time (see Sroufe et al., 2005). This led critics and even some proponents to conclude “that the attachment construct itself is wanting, that concepts such as attachment relationship and affective bond are superfluous, and that varying patterns of attachment behavior among infants are of little consequence” (Sroufe & Waters, 1977, p. 1184). Sroufe and Waters pointed out that the results of the studies under question (R. B. Cairns, 1972; Gerwirtz, 1972a, 1972b; Masters & Wellman, 1974; Rosenthal, 1973; Weinraub, Brooks, & Lewis, 1977) were flawed in that they viewed attachment “as a trait construct” which was “not essential to attachment theory.” Instead
of regarding it as a trait, it should be regarded as “an organizational construct, to be evaluated in terms of its integrative power” (Sroufe & Waters, 1977, p. 1185).

Such a stance prepared Sroufe to be an appropriate candidate for taking up the co-direction of the *Minnesota Study*. Sroufe had established himself as an eclectic theorist (see Sroufe, 1979) and a thoroughgoing and collaborative researcher (see Sroufe, 1977; Sroufe & Waters, 1977; Sroufe & Wunsch, 1972). Like Bowlby, Sroufe’s theory of the person is an ambitious attempt “to formulate a comprehensive theory of personality, emotional development, and psychopathology” (Duniec & Raz, 2011, p. 95). As a psychopathologist, Sroufe was convinced that the study of pathology and “normativity” are inseparable (Rutter & Sroufe, 2000). Sroufe guided the second phase of the *Minnesota Study* using a transactional, hierarchical, “cumulative pathways” model of development (Sroufe, 2005). This model allowed Sroufe to go beyond the Bowlby-Ainsworth formulation of attachment theory to more adequately deal with the complexities around the question: “What predictive power does early experience have on later development and behaviours?”

Scientists with the *Minnesota Study* have produced hundreds of scholarly articles and numerous monographs from the research. From their analysis of the data and interaction with other research, Sroufe and colleagues found that the “Ainsworth attachment assessments are reasonably interpreted as summaries of interactive experience with the primary caregiver” and that,

49Though this concern for meaningful patterns of activity was already taken up by Bowlby and Ainsworth, attachment theorists have had to return to this point again and again. Sroufe admits that, “attachment researchers like myself slip and refer to a child as ‘secure,’ when all we have is an assessment of a specific attachment relationship (usually at some earlier time)” (Sroufe, 2009, p. 181).
attachment assessments were robustly related to later aspects of individual characteristics, such as dependence/independence, self-esteem, self-management and school achievement, and are consistent predictors of later social relationships, from engaging preschool play partners, to forming close friendships in middle childhood, negotiating the complexities of the mix-gender adolescent peer group, and dealing with the intimacy of adult romantic relationships (Sroufe et al., 2010b, pp. 39–40).

However, the researchers of the *Minnesota Study* found that while nothing is more important in the development of the child than the care received, including that in the early years . . . ultimately, the individual person can only be understood within a model of continuing transactions between developing persons and the supports and challenges they are facing (Sroufe et al., 2005, p. 19).

On the other hand, the data from the *Minnesota Study* disconfirmed laddered/linear models of development and also the notion that subsequent experiences “overwrite” previous experiences and the persistence of infant traits (see Sroufe et al., 1983; G. J. Suess, Grossmann, & Sroufe, 1992; Carlson, Sroufe, & Byron Egeland, 2004; see also Kagan, 2000 for proponent of trait construct). In the end, Sroufe et al. (2005) proposed a holistic perspective on “the development of the person as a dynamic process” (p. 229).

It is hard to picture human development as a whole, since it is complex and takes place in an open system. All representations of human development are an ordering that emphasize certain elements over others and any given representation of the person can be critiqued for what is missed. That being said, if we take an ecological perspective, we understand that all studies need a beginning point; a matter of concern. For Sroufe, the main matter of concern is the impact of early attachment relationships on later development and the problem of continuity and change in that relationship. The *Minnesota Study* found that while early attachment patterns are significant, their impact is harder to trace over time and that the significance is always in relation to other factors.
including: genetics, cumulative history of adaptation, and current environment. However, the relation between early attachment experience and other factors is organized, transactional, and hierarchical. Speaking in general terms, “the fundamental feature of behavior is organization . . . revealed in the interplay of emotion, cognition, and social behavior” (Sroufe et al., 2005, pp. 38–39). The interplay between emotion, cognition, and social behavior is transactional, or in practice terms, intra-actional (Supkoff, Puig, & Sroufe, 2012, p. 130). They are mutually constituted within the person but also with other factors in the surround:

The interplay between person and surround is total and complete, operating on every level. Environment and individual are mutually creating in an ongoing way. Thus, the person is constructed over time in a process in which history influences what is experienced, and experience alters history (Sroufe et al., 2005, p. 229). From this perspective, even past and present are transacting, “every starting point, however early one looks, is also an outcome; every outcome is also a starting point (Sroufe & Siegel, 2011, p. 52).

There are two aspects to the hierarchical perspective (see Werner, 1948) as taken up by Sroufe. The first is that “development will always involve drawing on prior adaptation, and thus entail continuity, and yet continuity, because of development, always entails change” (Sroufe, 2005, pp. 352–353). Sometimes, Sroufe and colleagues speak of this in terms of pathway. From the organizational perspective, developmental pathways are “cumulative.” They are not so much taken or followed as they are expressed or extruded: “later forms build on earlier foundations that are themselves transformed in the process” (Sroufe, 2009, pp. 179–180). A more technical way to express this is in terms of epigenesis:

Individual differences in development should be characterized as a series of developmental pathways across an epigenetic, probabilistic landscape. At each
turn, changes in one direction or another are determined by an interaction between current developmental events and the constraints imposed by developmental pathways already taken (Belsky & Fearon, 2002, p. 380).

This suggests a more organic side to the picture: “the individual is the product of all of his or her experiences” (Sroufe, Carlson, Levy, & Egeland, 1999, p. 2). The trajectory of development is not set in stone or even sand, but is always being made; it is living. We’re speaking of the trajectory of roots and branches as much as we are of pathways. Paraphrasing Sroufe, the person is following as well as making a path (see Sroufe, 1979, p. 836, “the child is the artist as well as the painting”).

The second side to the hierarchal perspective is that not only are prior experiences transformed by later experience, but they pave the way for new matters-of-concern at different phases in life. While attachment sets the stage for future development, at different times and in different contexts people will be organized around other arrangements. School aged children will most likely be organized by the psycho-socio-material conditions associated with education and schooling. Even more starkly, children in the midst of war will be organized around living with war (Halevi, Djalovski, Vengrober, & Feldman, 2016). Which brings us back to attachment theory. The Minnesota Study found that even though attachment does not have the same importance at every phase of life, it still impacts the other matters-of-concern around which the person is organized. Before I show what it is to take the practice approach to Sroufe’s organizational perspective, I outline a brief critique of attachment theory.

Critique of Attachment Theory

The primary question concerns not the relative importance of early experience but the particular nature of its role in development. Moreover, in [organizational perspective] early experience may be transformed but is not erased by subsequent experience, as is argued by some theorists (e.g., Kagan, 1984; Lewis, 1998). It remains in force. Thus, the position is unique in simultaneously postulating that
early experience is not deterministic yet always remains a part of the developmental landscape (Sroufe, et al., 2010, p. 39).

As we saw in Chapter 2, there is a well-rehearsed critique of developmental psychology. However, most critiques fail to notice the distinctive contributions made by Bowlby and Ainsworth to developmental science. Further, there appears to be almost no engagement with Sroufe’s organizational perspective from a critical perspective. For instance, though Jerome Kagan has been a long-time critic of attachment theory (see Kagan, 1999; Kagan & Zentner, 2009; Kotelchuck, Zelazo, Kagan, & Spelke, 1975), I can find no indication that he engages with Sroufe’s organizational perspective or the Minnesota Study except for in perfunctory ways (Kagan, 2000). Further, I performed a digital search of Kincheloe and Horn’s Praeger Handbook of Education and Psychology (2007). The handbook takes a critical perspective and is directed toward “the need for educational psychologists to carefully examine what passes as reason and validated research” (p. 6). In over 950 pages I found only one reference to Bowlby and no mention of either Ainsworth, Sroufe, or attachment theory. The one reference to Bowlby is parenthetical referring to “Denise Riley’s 1983 evaluation of the role of the psychoanalysts Bowlby and Winnicott within the trajectories of state-funded day care provision for children” (Burman, 2007b, p. 642).

Burman, the author of the citation above, has critiqued attachment theory elsewhere (2007a), wondering whether the current fascination with attachment is connected with “the preoccupation with questions of dependence, security and nurturance with the contemporary geo-political situation” (p. 192). She notes that Bowlby has “major links with wartime ontologies and familial ideologies” (p. 191) and that Ainsworth’s SSP “fails to offer any useful discriminations” (p. 192). In Deconstructing
Developmental Psychology, Burman (1994) questions the ethics of SSP which she paints as purposely putting infants in distressful situations, observing the response and doing nothing to alleviate the situation. She further argues that attachment theorists in general and Bowlby in particular, tend to place too much responsibility on mothers for the welfare of the children.

It is acknowledged that Bowlby’s work, especially his earliest material, focused on mother as attachment figure. Nonetheless, this problem has been largely corrected. Contemporary attachment theory argues that,

> the infant’s development is inextricably tied to the care that surrounds it. . . . [However,] the emphasis on quality of care in shaping development [should not be] conceived within a concept of blaming parents . . . parents are not free-standing entities . . . [Rather] quality of attachment and other aspects of adaptation improve or worsen as supports and challenges for the family increase and decrease (Sroufe, 2005, p. 353).

Further, for organizational perspective “the primary question concerns not the relative importance of early experience but the particular nature of its role in development.” The organizational perspective is not deterministic, even though it has found that quality of care in the early years “always remains a part of the developmental landscape” (Sroufe, et al., 2010, p. 39).

As for Burman’s concerns that the SSP was cruel, the procedure was designed to be not cruel. It was based on the assumption that parents do sometimes leave their children alone with adults that parents consider safe. Further, in the SSP, if the child experiences “extreme” distress, the parent is supposed to return sooner than scheduled. However, in some cases, as in traditional Japanese families, the baby and the mother are never separated, so the SSP should not be used under those circumstance (see Klaus E. Grossmann et al., 2005; IJzendoorn & Kroonenberg, 1988).
Ramaekers and Suissa (2013) include attachment theory in their criticism that, the language of developmental psychology assumes a particular logic, that is, a causal logic, as well as a particular kind of goal, and both logic and goal are taken for granted and imported with the very language itself. The way to understand childrearing is in terms of a linear-developmental story, in which certain outcomes are implicitly posited as the desirable—and, ultimately, achievable—end point, and anything parents do along the way is understood as effecting the next step and, crucially, as taking us one step closer to reaching this end point (p. 80).

As we have seen, this notion of *causality* and *linearity* is denied by Sroufe who follows Bowlby in taking up a “non-linear, transactional model” of development where it is not only presumed that both history and present circumstances are important, but also that established patterns of adaptation may be transformed by new experiences while, at the same time, new experiences are framed by, interpreted within, and even in part created by prior history of adaptation (Sroufe, 2005, p. 350).

Still, Magnusson and Stattin (2007) argue that even though many late twentieth century developmental theorists postulate “the interdependent, reciprocal character of social interactions . . . the reciprocal nature of the concepts has often been lost in actual assessments” (p. 406). Sroufe acknowledges the problem:

[An organizational] perspective alters description of concepts, thinking about causation, and interpretation of research findings. It fundamentally changes the research agenda. We view etiological factors within a complex causal network. Interactive systems concepts replace linear causal thinking. Scholars widely embrace these ideas; nonetheless, we often slip into single pathogen, linear causal language. We grant putative physiological features privileged causal status (Sroufe, 2009, p. 180).

Taking a practice perspective would help attachment theorists to avoid “single pathogen, linear causal language” (see Caldwell, 2012; Schatzki, 2002) by attending to the ecological complexity of practice arrangements.

Valsiner (2007) has critiqued development psychologies that have a “narrow perspective of Western cultural histories and sociomoral concerns” and regard children
from classes and cultures “lower in the power hierarchy . . . as something to be modified by benevolent actions” (p. 168). There is little doubt that Bowlby’s original concerns emerged from working with war orphans, displaced children, and young criminals. However, it is interesting that one of the earliest effects that Bowlby’s theorizing had was on the way British hospitals treated new mothers and their babies (see Rowold, 2013). That being said, Valisner’s critiques are consistent with Popkewitz et al.’s (2006) observations that both education and developmental psychology are implicated in the cosmopolitan neo-colonialism.50

Cross-cultural studies have consistently shown that when the SSP is used with infants of non-Western peoples with a lower appreciation for self-contained autonomy that the infants score outside the norms observed among North American children. A meta-analysis done by IJzendoorn & Kroonenberg (1988) found, amongst other things, that in around 2,000 SSP classifications from eight separate countries that A (insecure-avoidant) classifications are significantly more common in Westernized countries and C (insecure-resistant) classification were more prevalent in places like Israel and Japan. For critics like Rothbaum et al. (2000) this indicates a cultural bias in the SSP. For IJzendoorn, though,

the search for a so-called culture-free test, i.e., a culture-free procedure to measure attachment, will not be fruitful because it presupposes universality instead of proving it. Instead of ‘begging the cross-cultural question’, it may be a better strategy to apply an Instrument already developed within a particular theoretical (and cultural) framework, to search for differences in out-come in different cultures, and to try to explain these differences theoretically (1990, p. 7).

50Kemmis et al distinguish between education and schooling
Development as Practice

To study development is to trace the ongoing organization of practices especially in relation to continuity and change and the enactment of “boundaries and relations” (Orlikowski & Scott, 2008, p. 462). In this next section I show how crucial terms like pathways, patterns, cumulative history, and even attachment belong to the same semantic space as practices. I then briefly explore why the organizational perspective has not overtly taken the practice turn. I conclude the chapter by framing organizational perspective theorizing around attachment, autonomy, and resilience in light of a practice perspective.

Shared Semantic Space

As we have already made clear, attachment itself is a practice. In many ways, attachment refers to a practice-array as seen from the outsider’s perspective. It is not so much that people practice attachment as that they can be seen to be practicing attachment.

Seen from an outside observer’s viewpoint the [attachment] system’s set-goal is to regulate behaviors designed to maintain or obtain proximity to and contact with a discriminated person or persons referred to as the attachment figure(s). From the psychological vantage point of the attached person, however, the system’s set-goal is felt security (Bischof, 1975). Both the external and the internal perspectives are useful and necessary, but the distinction should be kept clearly in mind (Bretherton, 1985, p. 6).

True, people appropriate the term, attachment, in understanding/explaining themselves, but in the literature, attachment is:

formulated at a more abstract level, referring to the affective bond between infant and caregiver and to the flexible organization of behavior in the service of this bond, in distinction to the behaviors themselves. . . . Moreover, attachment relationships [are] viewed as a normal part of social functioning, even in adulthood (Sroufe et al., 1983, p. 1616).

Recognizing that attachment is a practice arrangement as seen from the outside (Gherardi, 2009b) would help developmental theorists to keep attachment in perspective.
One of the things that Sroufe does to help him maintain perspective is to use the expression attachment history, observing that, “the insistence on the term, ‘history’ highlights the pathways theory. People don’t have [attachment] condition or style, they are on a pathway or ‘succession of adaptations’” (Sroufe, Egeland, & Kreutzer, 1990, p. 1364). All these terms—history, pathways, succession of adaptation—can be regarded as recurrent action patterns. At the core, then, attachment theory can be taken as a theory of practice and as such directs attachment researchers to examine attachment practices as patterns, pathways, or history. One of the analytic distinctions in practice theory is “between practice-as-performance (that is, as enacted in specific moments and places); and practice-as-entity (that is, the emergent outcome of such performances)” (Shove, 2010, p. 1279; see also Schatzki, 1996). In organizational perspective literature, when attachment is referring to patterns or relationships it is most likely referring to practice as performance; when attachment is associated with history or pathways it is referring to practice as entity. Thus when Sroufe et al. (2010a) report that, “development is not determined by early experience, but by the cumulative history of the child interacting with the environment” (p. 39), this can be rendered as:

development [as the organization of continuity and change] is not determined by [practice-as-performances], but by [emergent and ongoing practices] of the child [in intra-action] with the environment (p. 39).

Later in the same section, they state, “the early years merit special attention because the initial adaptations they promote become the starting place for subsequent transactions, framing how new experiences are engaged” (Sroufe et al., 2010a, p. 39). As noted earlier, the term transaction is often used in organizational perspective in the same way that intra-action is used in a practice vocabulary, but in this explanation, it can be read more in terms of practice-as-performance. Thus, the above sentence can be rendered:
The early years merit special attention because the emergent adaptive practices become the starting place for subsequent adaptive performances, framing how new experiences are engaged in/as/through practice (Sroufe et al., 2010a, p. 39).

Elsewhere, Sroufe has explained cumulative as “later forms build on earlier foundations that are themselves transformed in the process” (Sroufe, 2009, pp. 179–180). This all makes sense in terms of practice: “later practice arrangements build on earlier practice arrangements that are themselves transformed in the process [of being practiced]” (Sroufe, 2009, pp. 179–180). The infant attachment system provides the resources around which the human personality is organized and it is the first in a succession of attachment (or similar) relationships.

**Why Not Practice**

This brief analysis shows that Sroufe and colleagues take up all sorts of terms that are best understood as practice. However, they rarely speak in terms of practice themselves, instead using the terms listed above—history, pathways, succession of adaptation, and even more frequently, behaviour (sometimes with the adjective social). One explanation for this lack of concern for practice is that in doing psychology, attachment theorists are attending to “internal processes” as the prior unit of analysis. Bowlby argued that the continuity of the person derives from “internal working models” of self and other (Bowlby, 1988). Similarly, Sroufe et al. (2005) argue that, “expectations or representation” play the key role in the “progressive construction of the person” (p. 230) or “put another way, expectations and representations are the ‘carriers’ of experience.” In the end, they recognize that “experience, representation, and ongoing adaptation [practices] represent a nondissociable triad, inextricably linked together in a cyclical fashion” (p. 231).
From this perspective, Bowlby’s working models are mental *doings*. Even more, representations, like almost all other words with re- prefix are practice words, and are suggestive of recurrent action patterns. Mental representations are consistent with Reckwitz (2002b) theorizing on the place of the mental in practices:

Social practices are sets of routinized bodily performance, but they are at the same time sets of mental activities. They necessarily imply certain routinized ways of understanding the world, of desiring something, of knowing how to do something. . . . If somebody ‘carries’ (and ‘carries out’) a practice, he or she must take over both the bodily and the mental patterns that constitute the practice. These mental patterns are not the ‘possession’ of an individual ‘deep inside’, but part of the social practice (pp. 251-252).

It seems this would not be in dispute for organizational perspective theorists since representation as internal psychological process as part of a “non-dissociable triad” along with “experience and ongoing adaptation” (Sroufe et al., 2005, p. 231; see also Gerhard J. Suess & Sroufe, 2005).

Whether internal working models should be seen as practice, attachment theory has had a long concern with patterns of activity. Bretherton (1992) reports that, “a unique (at the time) aspect of Ainsworth’s methodology was the emphasis on *meaningful behavioral patterns* in context, rather than on frequency counts of specific behaviors” (Bretherton, 1992, p. 765; emphasis added). Sroufe’s concern for practice is indicated early in his career when he wrote: “one solution to the problem of continuity in individual development lies in seeking qualitative similarities in *patterns of behavior* over time, rather than behavioral identities” (Sroufe, 1979, p. 834; emphasis added). In a millennial retrospective on psychopathology, Sroufe and Cicchetti (2000) call attention to the need for more “process-oriented research” where researchers are no longer asking, “What is the antecedent of X?” but are instead investigating the bio-socio-psychological factors
and junctures “that initiate and maintain individuals on pathways probabilistically associated with X and a family of related outcomes?” (p. 257; emphasis added).

Working with ecologies of practices approach would help attachment researchers to maintain focus on process. This should not be difficult once it is recognized that from the outset, attachment theory was made possible by a turn to practice. Even the emphasis on internal working models or representation as core explanations for how attachment is carried forward need not be considered a turn from practice when it is understood that: 1) attachment theory recognizes that internal working models are preceded by and derived from the infant’s experience with attachment; 2) representations are consistent with cognitive-affective elements found in ecologies of practices approaches; and 3) if representations are to have any impact, they must be developed and carried as cognitive practices in transaction with immediate experience and ongoing adaptations.

Besides from internal working models, there are two other basic explanations for how attachment is carried forward. First, in accordance with ethology, Ainsworth and early attachment theorists presumed that variations in attachment were imprinted on the neurophysiological and would remain relatively constant even though “attachment behaviour may be heightened or dampened by situational factors” (Ainsworth, 1969, p. 971). The second account of how attachment takes hold is a more social perspective and relies on two premises: the “responsiveness hypothesis” and “the competence hypothesis” (see Waters et al., 2002). The responsiveness hypothesis held secure attachment in preschool children was an accomplishment of ongoing mutual responsiveness with an attachment figure (see D. Cicchetti & Wagner, 1990). The competence hypothesis held that “secure attachment relationships should stimulate social-cognitive competence more
than anxious attachment relationships” (IJzendoorn, 1990, p. 8). All of these explanations have been substantiated by the *Minnesota Study* and they are also all consistent with an ecologies of practices approach, especially when we recall that sociomateriality is one of the main premises and that twenty-first century practice theorists emphasize the intra-action between the body and the social.

**Reframing of Organizational Perspective**

Besides from the shared semantics between the organizational perspective and the practice approach there are three matters of concern that both attachment theory and practice theories share: attachment, resilience, and agency. In the remainder of the chapter I explore these terms in relation to each other.

**Attachment and the Sociomaterial**

While there is widespread concern for resilience in practice-based studies, Gherardi’s ecological approach to practice includes a special concern for the sociology of attachment:

> While psychology has traditionally framed attachment (and attachment theory) in terms of relationship with other humans (caregivers or beloved ones), a sociology of attachment also sees it in relation to non-material and non-human objects. The attachment to the object of practice—be it of love or hate, or of love and hate—is what makes practices socially sustained by judgments related not only to utility, but to ethics and aesthetics as well (Gherardi, 2009d, p. 537).

In what follows, I will make an analytic distinction between the two approaches to attachment: Sroufe’s organizational perspective on attachment is *psychosocial* and not merely psychological, and the perspective on attachment that Gherardi is pursuing is *sociomaterial* and not merely social.

An ecology of practices approach considers practitioners not only “for what they do and their competence in doing, but also for their attachment to the object of their
practices, as ‘amateurs’ of what they do” (Gherardi, 2015b, p. 21 emphasis added). From the practice perspective, sociomaterial “attachment is defined as the reflexive result of a corporeal, collective and orchestrated practice regulated by methods that, in their turn, are ceaselessly discussed (Gomart & Hennion, 1999) within the community of practitioners” (Gherardi, 2012b, pp. 225–226). In this sense, attachment in the broadest terms is an ongoing positive or negative cognitive-affective commitment to/with persons, objects (including epistemic objects), places, or practices. As such, secure attachment is not so much a task as it is a telos of practice-arrangements that give opportunity for attachment.

The primal psychosocial attachment relationship is a practice arrangement of three common elements: security-seeking, exploring, and attentive responsiveness (see Bell, 2012, p. 278) and is the first community in which a child belongs as practitioner. It takes a moment to grasp that for the most part, attachment is orchestrated by the child. Marris (1993) points out,

long before a boy or girl can express meaning in words, each has already established a powerful organization of emotions, desires, and patterns of experience centered upon the two essential tasks of childhood: to secure the attention of attachment figures and to learn to use growing abilities (p. 78).

While the child is responsible for orchestrating attachment, the quality of attachment is mostly dependent on the caregiver’s practices of attentive responsiveness. In turn, the caregiver’s capacity for attentive responsiveness is related mostly to the caregiver’s history of attachment and to ongoing psycho-socio-material supports. Further, attachment research has shown that caregivers who understand their and the child’s role in attachment may be more effective in making the most of their own history and ongoing social and cultural supports (see Sroufe, 2005). From the organization perspective “cultural learning begins within the attachment relationship” (K. E. Grossmann &
Grossmann, 2005, p. 208), thus we should expect that learning-in-practice around psychosocial attachment will have some impact on amateur sociomaterial attachment relations, giving a different sense to Schwalbe’s (1993) claim that consumer capitalism “profanes the self by denying the reality of the chronic feelings of emptiness that come from staking our worth on commodified images” (p. 344; see also cp. 3).

Attachment research tends to focus on attachment in terms of infant attachment and parenting. A practice approach to attachment would explore mature attachment relations in practice communities and what they produce or accomplish, especially in relation to learning and knowing, and to the challenges and continuities that make up organizational life. If attachment “always remains in force” (Sroufe et al., 2010b, p. 39), then we need to understand educational and workplace sites not only in terms of contestation, but also as sites of the co-production of multiple mature attachment relationships. Further, as Marris (1993) points out,

the experience of attachment, . . . is itself both the product of the culture, and a determinant of how the culture will be reproduced in the next generation—not only the culture of attachment itself, but all our ideas of order, authority, security, and control (p. 80).

One area this might show up is in the similarity between affect regulation in both primal attachment relation and in practice communities. One of the critical roles that the attachment figure plays in the attachment relation is the regulation of the infant’s affective states—soothing, comforting, and helping the child when under duress; and mirroring, encouraging, and supporting the child’s enjoyments of achievement or discovery (see Bell, 2012). Something like affect regulation is happening in sociomaterial attachment: taste-making. Gherardi (2009d) explains, “taste-making as a collective, emergent discursive process that constantly refines practices, and which is
done by saying, and which is said by doing.” Novices are initiated into and craft identities amidst a practice community by learning and enacting a shared “vocabulary for appraisal.” In such a community, novice and amateur alike are constantly “refining performances” through doing and reviewing practices. Because of “the pleasure of practising and sharing that pleasure,” a practice community refines performance through dissent and experimentation in “the constant endeavour to refine the methods and meaning of the practice for those who derive identity from it” (p. 536). Taste-making is involved not just in reproduction of practices, but also in the negotiation and experimentation with, and even deviation from, practices. This helps “to answer the questions as to why a practice continues to be practised and how it changes by being practiced” (Gherardi, 2012b, p. 226). I would suggest that practice theorists like Gherardi would benefit from exploring infant attachment relationships in relation to sociology of attachment and especially in investigating the connections between affect regulation in infants and taste-making in practice communities.

**Resilience as Resilient Moves**

Understanding resilience as a developmental process, with prior development as a context for later lawful development, allows current functioning to be predicted as an outcome of previous development and to serve as a predictor of future development. Examining this process over time is especially critical for understanding how individuals are able to maintain positive adaptation despite the presence of some or many of the risk factors or experiences of adversity that we currently understand to distract from the process of successful adaptation and development (Supkoff et al., 2012, p. 130).

Many attachment theorists are concerned with explaining the relation between attachment and resilience (see Bell, 2012; Sroufe et al., 2010a; Supkoff et al., 2012). Similarly, many practice researchers study practice in the interests of understanding and
supporting organizational and professional resilience (see Fenwick, 2012; Hopwood, 2015a; Norros et al., 2015). In a recent article, Aranda and Hart (2015) argued that, practice theory provides a novel approach to understanding resilience. When conceived as a social practice, resilience, as resilient moves or actions, can be seen to emerge, converge, complement or conflict with other social practices . . . Resilient moves, as emergent practices, are then entangled and enmeshed with other sets of practices which are in turn inevitably part of a broader set of practices related to health (p. 357).

Assembling the two approaches, psychosocial resilience is an ongoing practice, a set of resilient moves. Resilience becomes apparent in the face of adversity, but it should not be understood merely as a kind of autonomic “adrenal response” to adversity. Resilience is a set of practical competencies, not a trait or a response. Simply put, resilience is successful adaptation to stress. Successful adaptation includes drawing on all the resources available without undermining existing or future supports and competencies. In more analytic terms, resilience “is a descriptive term to convey adaptive functioning beyond expectations based on the presence of a developmental risk factor in a population” (Supkoff et al., 2012, p. 127); as such it is “not a static state” (p. 130). From an attachment perspective, “resilience is an emergent property of a hierarchically organized set of protective systems that cumulatively buffer the effects of adversity” (Roisman, Padrón, Sroufe, & Egeland, 2002, p. 1216).

The developing person is both following and making a path. A history of secure attachment not only sets children on a path towards other secure attachment relationships later in life, it also provides them with the resources, including neuronal, to make the path more secure and fulfilling for themselves and others. Bell (2012) point out that, individuals who have received high levels of appropriate nurturance will have developed dense, consolidated neurons in the caregiving and attachment systems, and they will have high capacity to activate and express those motivations. Other individuals without experiences of nurturance may never have developed the
neurons. Still others may have developed the neurons, but their systems may be suppressed by fear or other motivations. These neuronal developments determine the capacity for caregiving and attachment. But at any moment, one of these systems can be inactivated, can be partially activated, or can be fully activated. I distinguish the level of attachment (or capacity) from the level of activation of the attachment system (Bell, 2010) (p. 279).

Resilience looks different at different phases of life and in different sociomaterial contexts, but the Minnesota Study indicated that children who recover from “a period of adversity or maladaptation” tend to be organized around a foundation of secure attachment, ongoing parental support, flexible supportive sibling/peer relations and/or have organized their lives around “increased supports and decreased challenges” (Sroufe, 2005, p. 363). In this sense, resilience is more about “understanding healthy development and good outcomes in spite of exposure to risks” (Zolkoski & Bullock, 2012, p. 2296).

Maladaptive, adaptive, and resilient practices are not static states but must all be seen as intra-actions of the person with the body and its affects as well as with the sociomaterial environment. The challenge is to uncover the factors that prefigure one’s practices of competence or resilience (see Supkoff et al., 2012, p. 130). Resilience includes orchestrating sustained support from/for others and exploring environment for additional resources. These practices are both nascent in the primal attachment experience and are key elements in secure attachment. However, in the face of adversity, these processes “are necessarily scaffolded by current and [other] long-standing developmental supports” (Roisman, Padrón, Sroufe, & Egeland, 2002, p. 1216). That is, “resilient moves, as emergent practices, are then entangled and enmeshed with other sets of practices which are in turn inevitably part of a broader set of practices related to health” (Aranda & Hart, 2015, p. 357).
Autonomy and Agency

Many developmental psychologists recognize autonomy as one of the goals of development even though it is also recognized that, “empirical investigations of autonomy-related phenomena . . . have been largely atheoretical and conceptually cloudy in nature” (Steinberg & Silverberg, 1986, p. 841). From the organizational perspective, autonomy is a set of social practice-arrangements rather than a characteristic or trait of the person. Autonomy will look different at different times of life and in different locales. For instance, autonomy at adolescence would include practices related to “emotional autonomy from childhood dependency on parents, behavioral autonomy in terms of independent functioning and self-reliance, and cognitive autonomy involving self-confidence in decision making.” These are accomplished through a history of secure attachment and ongoing adult support of infant and child’s autonomy seeking behavior (see La Guardia, Ryan, Couchman, & Deci, 2000) “rather than through repudiations of parents” (D. Cicchetti & Rogosch, 2002, pp. 9–10).

There’s a much more mundane understanding of autonomy, the skill of being able to work independently and the ability to solve problems by oneself. I can imagine no situation that would not benefit from children developing such a capacity, and this is something that education could probably support and even foster. However, this is a much more modest notion of autonomy than the self-contained autonomous individual of WST or the triple-e student (expressive, entitled, enterprising) critiqued by Martin and McLellan (2013, p. 13). As we speak of autonomy as skill, it would be helpful to shift terms from autonomy to agency. This is for two reasons. First, etymologically, the work
of autonomy is rule-making, but the work of the agent is acting or doing. After all, it wasn’t so much autonomy that Kant was after, but the autonomous agent:

Kant’s idea that education is the process through which human beings develop their rational capacities so that they become capable of independent judgement, which, in turn, forms the basis for agentic and autonomous action, has not only had a profound impact on the education of children. There is also a long-standing tradition that sees adult education as a major lever for empowerment and emancipation (Biesta & Tedder, 2007, p. 133).

Second, practice theorists celebrate the way that treating practices as the smallest and prior unit of analysis resolves the structure-agency split. For practice theory, persons cannot be reduced to either “calculating or duty-obeying agents” (Reckwitz, 2002b, p. 258). Instead, agency is a matter of “bodily movements, of forms of interpreting, knowing how and wanting and of the usage of things” (p. 259). This perspective helps us appreciate the agency of infants and children. Accordingly, educators and parents working with ecology of practices will be as concerned with fostering agency as they will be with developing autonomy as a skill.

Philosophers like Bratman (2001) assert that children lack agency because they “do not yet have the conceptual resources for normative deliberation” (p. 310). From an ecological perspective, that’s giving normative deliberation too much credit and failing to appreciate the difference that practice makes in shaping agency. Ahearn (2001) defines agency much more inclusively as “the socioculturally mediated capacity to act” (p. 130). Ahearn’s approach to agency is consistent with the pre-verbal child’s orchestrations in the attachment relationship. Eichner (2014) explains that,

agency entails the potential to trigger processes of transformation. This agentive ability is generally inherent in humanity, but varies culturally and in terms of gender, class, education, generation or ethnicity. It is something that can be improved on, but the extent to which an agent is able to deploy agency is constrained by their resources (p. 24).
This is all consistent with the picture Sroufe gives of people as both following and making a path and the notion that children orchestrate attachment relationships.

One of the more thoroughgoing exploration of agency is Emirbayer and Mische’s (1998) theorization of agency. Their project to “distinguish agency as an analytic category in its own right” (p. 963) while practicing a relational sociology of “the interpenetration of agency and structure” (p. 962; see also Emirbayer, 1997 on relational sociology) is taken up by a number of twenty-first century practice theorists (see Antonacopoulou, 2015; Kaplan & Orlikowski, 2006; Miettinen et al., 2012). Emirbayer and Mische engage with canonical philosophical and sociological writers on agency in their argument that agency should be construed as an outcome of the “dynamic interplay” among three main elements: routine, purpose, and judgement. Like other relational and environmental models that I have been working with, these elements can be separated analytically, but not empirically. Emirbayer and Mische define human agency dynamically as,

*the temporally constructed engagement by actors of different structural environments—the temporal-relational contexts of action—which, through the interplay of habit, imagination, and judgment, both reproduces and transforms those structures in interactive response to the problems posed by changing historical situations* (1998, p. 970).

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51While Emirbayer and Mische’s work is seminal, the sociological focus means that their engagement with existing research in developmental and child psychology is limited (limited mainly to Mead and Erikson). Further, while there is extensive engagement with Bourdieu and Giddens, the timing of the essay—prior to the fourth wave of practice theorizing—means that while their work contributes to the practice return, they themselves do not engage it. Google Scholar research indicates this has not changed. In recently published work, Emirbayer continues to engage Bourdieu but fails to engage with the organizational theorists of practice or Schatzki or Reckwitz (Emirbayer & Goldberg, 2005).
Beista and Tedder’s (2007) exploration of the place of agency in education depends on Emirbayer and Mische’s concept of agency as achievement:

To think of agency as achievement rather than as a ‘power’ also helps to acknowledge that the achievement of agency depends on the availability of economic, cultural and social resources within a particular ecology. In this sense we can say that the achievement of agency will always result from the interplay of individual efforts, available resources and contextual and structural ‘factors’ as they come together in particular and, in a sense, always unique situations. Methodologically an ecological approach to understanding agency thus focuses the attention on the unique configurations of such ‘factors’ (p. 137).

This echoes the findings in the Minnesota Study that “ultimately, the individual person can only be understood within a model of continuing transactions between developing persons and the supports and challenges they are facing” (Sroufe et al., 2005, p. 19).

Sroufe et al.’s empirical research supports a relational sociology and helps us to see that fluctuations in agency are not just ecological but also developmental. The “non-linear process view” (Sroufe et al., 2010a, p. 39) of development means, the interplay between person and surround is total and complete, operating on every level. Environment and individual are mutually creating in an ongoing way. Thus, the person is constructed over time in a process in which history influences what is experienced, and experience alters history (Sroufe et al., 2005, p. 229).

Biesta and Tedder share a similar concern for development—they use the term lifecourse, but they seem to struggle with the way that agency could be both an achievement and also ongoing. From their perspective, “agency is always located between past and future” (2007, p. 136). Emirbayer and Mische elaborate the polychronic as “multiple, overlapping ways of ordering time toward which social actors can assume different simultaneous agentic orientations” where actors “are embedded in and oriented toward the past, the future, and the present at any given moment” (1998, pp. 963–964).

For Emirbayer and Mische (1998), “there are no concrete agents, but only actors who engage agentically with their structuring environments” (p. 1004). As above,
gerunds are helpful for speaking of what it means for actors to engage agentically, and
Emirbayer and Mische employ gerunds freely. Their actors are “evaluating and
reconstructing the conditions of their own lives” (p. 964); “formulating projects for the
future” (p. 964); engaging a “schematizing process” in recalling the past (p. 978);
“structuring relationships” and “contexts of action” (p. 1004); “exploring and
reconstructing contexts of action” (p. 1008); “exercising different mediating influences”
(p. 1008); “fusing, extending, and transforming . . . received schemas” (p. 1009). From an
organizational perspective, these are all ongoing accomplishments or skills. Agency isn’t
a power, but it is more than individual effort, it is a practice-arrangement that develops
and is supported in community. If that is the case, identifying and training in those skills
should be one of the main concerns for working towards the full development of the
person.

My dissertation has been concerned with explaining what it might be for
educators to work towards the full development of the human personality without
entailing the autonomous individual. Working with an organizational perspective of
development means that “full development” takes attachment into consideration as the
foundational—if not central—development in a person’s life. The initial infant
attachment relationship provides many of the bio-psycho-social resources that support
resilient moves. Educators will make sure to support, develop, and augment those
resources. Further, the initial infant attachment relationship is succeeded by other forms
of attachment relationship. Educators working toward the full development of the human
personality will support the student’s capacity for agency in their attachment
relationships (whether with persons, peoples, practices, or places). This includes skills in
orchestrating, exploring, carrying, responding, negotiating, structuring, repairing, transforming, translating, mediating, and so on. All of this is in the interests of resiliency. The task of educators then is not to work towards the full development of autonomy and flourishing, but rather to work towards fostering and supporting agency and resiliency. I explain this more in the next chapter.
Throughout my dissertation, I have taken up practice as a heuristic and provocative strategy in order to explore the developing person in two different environments: the primal attachment relationship and as student in obligatory education. I do this in the interests of showing that educators can take up the full development of the person without entailing the autonomous individual. In Chapter 2, I gave an overview of twenty-first century practice theories in order to set the stage for showing what it is to take a practice approach to existing theoretical research projects. In the third chapter, I elaborated on an ecologies of practices approach funded by Gherardi’s research and theorizing. This set the stage for the next two chapters where I read two different theoretical research projects through a practice lens. In the fourth chapter, relying mainly on research from the Stanford group, I rehearsed a history of obligatory education and its association with the autonomous individual. The fourth chapter also included a critical history of the psy-complex and the imbalance of personal over social goals in education. In the fifth chapter, I reviewed Sroufe’s organizational perspective on the development of the person, showing that such a perspective should be considered as a theory of practice. As such, it could fill a gap in social theories of practice that under-theorize the person. I then made a series of moves. Combining psychosocial and sociomaterial approaches to organization and development, I argued that both attachment and resiliency should be
regarded as ongoing practices rather than character traits (whether essential or earned). At the end of the chapter, I shifted attention away from autonomy as a skill to agency as achievement, mainly by interacting with Emirbayer and Mische’s (1998) *What is Agency?* I concluded that if agency isn’t a power and it is more than individual effort, then educating for the full development of the person includes identifying and training students in skills that give people the capacity to enact agency. However, taking an ecologies of practices approach informed by attachment theory implies that training students to work by themselves, to think independently, and to take responsibility for their thinking and feeling is predicated on practices associated with secure attachment and not on repudiation of family and culture of origin. Further, caregivers’ capacity to foster infant secure attachment depends on a number of things, including receiving the necessary social supports. This conclusion should not be taken as arguing for collectivism over individualism: “practice theorists aim to respect both the efforts of individual actors and the workings of the social. To the individualists, they insist there is such a thing as society; to the societists, they affirm the significance of individual activity” (Whittington, 2006, p. 614).

I have been arguing that taking a socioecological perspective on human development helps teachers to continue to support and build upon the resiliency that comes with achieving a history of secure attachment. However, given the inclination of obligatory education towards autonomous individualism, what is needed is an ecologies of practices approach to researching, administrating, teaching, and learning. Kemmis et al. (2014) have been demonstrating the emergence of such an approach in Australia. I will do a brief review of their work on site based educational development in the next
section. Following that, I will elaborate on what I have learned about using a practice approach to analyse existing theoretical research projects dealing with recurrent activity patterns. I will conclude by stating some of the limitations of my project and exploring opportunities for further research.

Site Based Educational Development

Grasping this way of understanding the work of the profession, we believe, will prepare professional educators for the most important challenge for education in our time, as in every time in the history of education: the challenge of *revitalising education*, not just in the abstract, not just in general, but at every site where the practice of education is conducted. Grasping the task of site based education development will allow the profession to recover and restore the practice of education so that what schools do is education, not just schooling (Kemmis, Wilkinson, et al., 2014, p. 12).

Site based educational development “is the development of education and educational practices to be appropriately and effectively responsive to the local needs, opportunities and circumstances of students, schools and communities in diverse and different local situations—at each local site” (Kemmis, Wilkinson, et al., 2014, p. 213). Recalling that Kemmis et al. take a neo-Aristotelian (through MacIntyre) and neo-Marxist (through Habermas) approach to practice theory, they take up the language of *site* from Schatzki’s site ontologies which “forge a path between individualism and hitherto dominant societisms” (Schatzki, 2003).

Kemmis et al. identify two main kinds of arrangements: *practice architectures* and *ecologies of practices*. Together, “these arrangements provide the resources that make . . . practice possible; they prefigure practices without predetermining them” (p. 212). Local schools exist within the practice ecologies that include the formal structuring of administrating, researching, teaching, and professional practices. Practice architectures are the ongoing intra-actions of sayings, doings, and relatings that enable and constrain
activity in a particular arrangement of practices. As such, site based educational development is concerned not only for teaching and learning practices in the school, but also for the practices of the communities that make up and surround the school. Students of educational research will appreciate the affinity of sight based educational development with action research.

Stephen Kemmis, a long-time proponent of action research began to take the turn to practice in the new millennium. Kemmis has had a long concern for practice, especially professional practices, however, he like others has only recently re-turned to practice. One of his first major projects that took up the re-turn to practice engaged mainly with COP and second and third wave theorists—Bourdieu, Foucault, and MacIntyre (Kemmis, 2005). In the years that followed, he and several colleagues developed two pictures of practice arrangements: practice architectures (Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008) and ecologies of practices (Wilkinson, Kemmis, Hardy, & Edwards-Groves, 2010). Shortly afterwards, Kemmis and colleagues used a research approach they call “philosophical-empirical inquiry.” This approach is a “way to investigate practices” (Kemmis, Wilkinson, et al., 2014, p. 57) by instigating a “‘conversation’ between topics and issues in practice theory and philosophy, on the one hand, and topics and issues concerning the educational practices [they] have observed and discussed with [their] informants” (p. 15). Their funded research took several years as they worked with educational leaders, teachers, and students in several locations. Their (2014) report, 52

[^52]: It might be helpful to note that philosophical-empirical inquiry bears some resemblance to theoretical research programs (see J. Berger & Zelditch, 1993).
published as *Changing Practices, Changing Education*, called for using a practice approach as the foundation for site based educational development which names what happens when teachers and others use their professional understanding, judgment and creativity to respond to the unique opportunities, circumstances and needs that exist in that specific place; to the educational interests of the particular students, families, and community who live and work there; and to the educational and professional interests of the teachers and leaders who practice there (p. 153).

The term, site based educational development is based on their findings, consistent with WST, that “*changing education, no matter how it is imposed or encouraged, always sets in train processes of ‘site based education development’*” (p. 205). The question then isn’t whether development will be site based, but what approach is needed by those initiating and participating in educational change so that development “can serve as the vehicle for *revitalizing education* and re-invigorating the students, teachers and school and system leaders who live and work together” (p. 205).

There are at least three reasons that Kemmis et al.’s model of site based educational development is successful. The first is that as Australians, Kemmis and colleagues are part of a network of educators who have turned to practice in training and educating professionals. The second is that the researchers were able to find educational sites that had already implemented a communities of practice approach in teaching, learning, and leading. Third, Kemmis’ own turn to practice was pre-figured by his theorizing of critical participatory action research (see Kemmis, 2009; Kemmis, McTaggart, & Nixon, 2014b).53 Although there has always been a practice element to action research, Kemmis has now come to see that practice should play a central role:

53If Nicolini ever revises his (2013) introduction to practice research he should be sure to include critical participatory action research.
With Kurt Lewin, thought to be the originator of the term ‘action research’ in English, we take the view that “there is nothing so practical as a good theory” (Lewin 1951, p. 169). However, unlike Lewin, we now think that it is more helpful to think about theory not just as texts but as dynamic and changing, and as constituted in practices of theorising that orient us to the world in distinctive ways—so we continue to ask, “Are we seeing things as they really are?” (Kemmis, McTaggart, et al., 2014b, p. 2).

The two core concepts behind site based educational development, practice architectures and ecologies of practices, are framed within a model of site ontologies. I’ll give a brief description of each of these, indicating the kind of difference they make for site based educational development. I agree with Kemmis et al. that “site based education development has the potential to be a powerful vehicle for revitalising education and re-invigorating educational practices and practitioners” (p. 206), but the practice approach I take is part of a different stream than theirs and so there are some distinctions I would make as a point of clarifying rather than correcting.

My goal in this section is to show that there is a well-developed practice approach to education that has been well researched, well elaborated, and is well situated to influence national and regional approaches to educational change. Kemmis and his colleagues are concerned about the undue influences of New Public Management (or neoliberalism) that have transformed “education into standardized, factory-like schooling” and in the course, stripped “education of its proper goal, that of preparing students to live well in a world worth living in” (Schatzki, 2014, p. v).⁵⁴ Kemmis and his colleagues come from a critical-reflexive standpoint but are also embedded in the

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⁵⁴I understand “factory-like schooling” to be more an ideological than an analytic expression (see Hamilton, 1989, 2015).
They are not only working in state-sanctioned educational sites, their research was funded in part by established funding agencies like the Australian Research Council.
Practice Architectures

Practice architectures are related to Schatzki’s “practice-arrangement bundles” (Schatzki, 2012, p. 14). At stake is the question of what are practices for: What is their project? The project of practices are not always apparent, but Kemmis and colleagues have developed a tool to bring the projects to the surface by searching along three dimensions: “cultural-discursive, material-economic, and social-political arrangements” as pertains to the site under investigation (Kemmis, Wilkinson, et al., 2014, p. 16). Each of these three conceptual models are pools of order that have a programmatic element. For instance, one of the concerns for Kemmis et al. is to bring intersubjectivity and Habermas’ theorization of communicative action into play (p. 9; see also Habermas, 1987). As well, each of the three dimensions are occupied by a particular gerund. The cultural-discursive is occupied by ‘sayings’, the material-economic is occupied by ‘doings’, and the social-material is occupied by ‘relatings’ (pp. 13-14). Kemmis et al. argue that,

Making ‘relatings’ explicit brings the social-political dimension of practice into the light, draws attention to the medium of power and solidarity which always attends practice, and invites us to consider what social-political arrangements in a site help to hold a practice in place (p. 30).

Further, these three dimensions are tied to “ancient Greek distinctions between . . . (a) dialectic or logic, (b) physics, and (c) ethics” (see Hadot, 1995), and to Habermas’ (1971) distinctions between “(a) language, (b) work and (c) power” (Kemmis, Wilkinson, et al., 2014, p. 30).56

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56There is also some similarity here to Hopwood’s (2014) language of dimensions of times, spaces, bodies, and things; as well as to my own theorizing around ecoconjunctions of articulation, attachment, and assemblage. It would be better to see
This elaboration appears to be quite helpful for those who are working with less inclusive understandings of practice associated with MacIntyre and educating for professional practice. However, from my perspective, all practices are doings. Sayings and relatings are just a special kind of doing. While I don’t find this particular analytic approach necessary, the kinds of distinctions made by Kemmis and colleagues around practices architectures promises to be useful, especially for bringing policy makers and administrator onboard. Practice researchers using Nicolini’s toolkit approach would do well to add this model, especially when engaging professional practices.

**Ecologies of Practices**

While the term, *practice architecture* is unique to Kemmis and colleagues (though aligned with Schatzi’s *practice-arrangements*), the association of ecology and practice is widespread and the authors provide an extensive review of the way it has been taken up by other theorists. Kemmis and colleagues’ association of practice and ecology is extensive and critical to their project of site based educational development. They make two unique contributions, one is to note that it is not ecology of practice but *ecologies of practices*. In an earlier iteration, Kemmis & Mutton (2012) defined ecologies of *practice* as “distinctive interconnected webs of human social activities (characteristic arrangements of sayings, doings and relatings) that are mutually-necessary to order and sustain a practice as a practice of a particular kind and complexity (for example, a progressive educational practice)” (p. 15). In *Changing Practices* they say that they “have begun to use the plural ‘practices’ to emphasise that an ecology of practices involves

these as three related but different analytic tools rather than as different terms for the same things.
various different kinds of practices that co-exist in a site” (Kemmis, Wilkinson, et al., 2014, p. 50).

Kemmis et al. spend a great deal of time showing that their understanding of practices is consistent with Caputo’s (1996) theorizing of ecology as *living systems* and that practices are life-like. While their main point is that practices are interdependent (or mutually constituting or intra-acting), they also point out several other ways that the metaphor highlights things that might otherwise be missed. Practices “‘feed’ one another, as we hope teaching sometimes ‘feeds’ learning” (Kemmis, Wilkinson, et al., 2014, p. 47). From an ecologies of practices perspective, practices “can sustain (that is, symbiotically and interdependently) or suffocate other practices, and different ‘ecologies of practices’ may be hospitable to some practices and not to others” (p. 50). This picture of practices sustaining or suffocating other practices offers another way of understanding the institutional isomorphism observed by neo-institutionalists (see DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Meyer et al., 1997). Institutional arrangements don’t necessarily require intentional coercive agency in order to take hold in a particular site, but that doesn’t mean there is an absence of violence as existing practice-arrangements are supplanted and even suffocated. Meyer et al. (1993) report on this when they observe that after the rapid expansion of mass education in Botswana, “the past patterns of rural youthful life no longer have meaning, the realistic, limited work future of a great many young people is perceived as a ‘social problem’” which is to be solved by different, better, more educational practice arrangements (p. 459). An ecologies of practices approach to site based educational development would be much more conscious of the different interdependencies and predatorial relations in the web of life at any given site.
Kemmis et al. identify five ecologies of practices common to the institution of obligatory education: 1) student learning, 2) teaching, 3) professional learning, 4) leading, and 5) researching (Kemmis, Wilkinson, et al., 2014, p. 47). These intra-actions are observed in the sayings, doings, and relatings that happen in and among these practices and “these five kinds of practices have existed in some kind of relationship to one another since the rise of compulsory schooling” (p. 50). As such, those wishing to achieve educational change must recognize and work to transform the different practices at play in their educational site in relation to larger educational environment. Since I consider ecology to be as much a sociological term as a biological one, it is irrelevant to me whether or not we can speak of practices as living (at the same time, the metaphor of practices as living can be useful). However, in relation to my project, I would argue that since the primal attachment relationship is so crucial, that family and culture of origin is not just another ecology of practice that intersect with educational sites, but rather should be considered as a sixth elements of those sites. Furthermore, if practices can sustain and predate other practices, then teaching, leading, and so on must be careful to sustain attachment practices rather than displacing or suffocating them.

**Gherardi**

Gherardi’s work in organizational learning and knowledge and her development of an ecologies of practices approach deserves a second look for those invested in site based educational development. Not only is her understanding of ecology helpful, but her background in organizational theory and her special concern for organizational learning and knowing would be a boon for educationalists who take up an organizational
perspective of human development. Further, all the identified elements of educational ecologies—teaching, teacher learning, leading, researching, and even student learning—can be analysed as formal organizations. Gherardi’s own focus has been on work place and professional learning (see Gherardi, 2012a; Gherardi & Perrotta, 2014a). The challenge is to translate her oeuvre on professional learning and adult organizations into material pertinent to obligatory education. I quote at length:

Treating education as a social practice entails conceiving it as the effect of a texture of practices where different logics and different cultures meet. From their encounter an epistemic object (education) takes shape in time and space. This object is in a continuous state of translation, not only because it acquires situated meanings according to the practice in which it is embedded, but also because the translation process is movement and energy. Any translation is the result of the active work of heterogeneous “carriers” (intermediaries or Träger) that in the process find a place or are locked into place. When an actor places an intermediary in circulation (like the artifact ‘practice-based learning’), it seeks to define, from its own point of view, the number of other actors, their place in the world, their characteristics, the nature of their relations, and their position vis-à-vis the actor attempting the translation. Assuming a practice-based approach to education means investigating and describing the strategies, tricks, maneuvers, actions and enterprises with which individual or collective actors undertake translations in order to consolidate the network that supports them and make it as permanent as possible (often in alliance with objects and artefacts that grant durability to it) (Gherardi, 2015a, p. 180; see also Latour, 1999).

This piece is from the conclusion to Practice-based learning in higher education jostling cultures (Kennedy, Billett, Gherardi, & Grealish, 2015) is vol. 10 in the Australian series on “Professional and practice based learning.” That Gherardi co-edited the volume is indicative both of her growing recognition and also that some in the Australian school of practice are taking a more inclusive approach to practice. At the same time, there is in the chapter and in the citation above some evident impatience. For Gherardi, “practice-based learning” is a particular artifact in education and should itself be subject to a more practice-based approach to studying and enacting. As well, we hear in this citation,
Gheardi’s concerns for an ecologies of practices approach that is concerned with sociomateriality, becoming, and sensible knowing.

**Agency**

In the previous chapter I explored what actors do in general. I asked: What do doings, do? What are actors doing? Yes, a person is teaching/learning, but what is teaching/learning doing? Certainly there is ordering and orientation toward time, but the teaching/learning is doing more. I can think of a number of things that we have already broached: orchestrating, carrying, assembling, mending, repairing, impacting, arranging, negotiating, account-giving, and so on. Also sense-making, which includes not just the cognitive but all the senses, especially taste-making. All of these gerunds are ongoing and they involve routine, purpose, and judgement which are critical for achieving agency (see Emirbayer & Mische, 1998). These practices are also part of the ecologies of practices. They are part of the background; actors under the right conditions, with the right resources, pick these things up and put them together to transform the social. You can’t teach these things instrumentally, but educators can make sure that students have plenty of opportunity to get good at orchestrating, assembling, mending, and so on.

Most of the gerunds associated with agency are enacted in ecoconjunction of either articulation or attachment. As such, they tend to be found along two poles: in articulation as actors moving between distance and unity, and in attachment as actors moving between distance and involvement (see Grossberg, 2010); they can be observed by taking note of the various prefixes: re-, a-, com-, and so on. What is more, several of the gerunds associated with agency can be made to reverse direction by adding a prefix
like de- or a dis-: forming/deforming; assembling/disassembling. Biesta and Tedder (2007) give a sense of how important it to take this up ecologically:

Emirbayer and Mische help us to see that there is a particular kind of learning that may help people to gain (more) control over and give (more) direction to their life, viz., learning that has to do with understanding and evaluating the composition, history and ‘ecology’ of one’s agentic orientations. . . It is important not to forget, however, that such learning can only ever be a necessary condition for the achievement of agency, but never a sufficient one. Whether a change in one’s agentic orientations will make a difference in practice, depends not only on one’s orientations and engagement with the present. It depends also on available resources and on engagement with contextual and structural factors. The other important question is what will ‘trigger’ this kind of learning. Whereas Emirbayer and Mische seem to capitalise on the idea that it is insight that will lead to change, we should remain open to the possibility that it is change in people’s lives that will actually lead to insight and understanding (p. 139; emphasis added).

I find Kemmis and colleagues’ theorization on practice to be insightful and encouraging. While I operate with a more generalized and inclusive understanding of practice, there is much to learn. It is especially encouraging to watch someone of Kemmis’ stature and experience take the turn to practice and make it work in such a short time. Apart from the issues already mentioned above, there is one other difference between Kemmis’ and my approach to site based education development. While the concept of site based education has taken a hold of me, my aspirations for what education can do are much more modest than Kemmis et al.’s. In their concluding chapter they state,

On this view of education, then, teachers and leaders in schools (for example) might more frequently ask themselves what new practices students are intended to learn; what sayings, doings and relatings hang together in the project of that practice; what practice architectures enable and constrain the practice in the classroom, the school and in the community; and how the practice does or does not foster individual and collective self-expression, self-development and self-determination not just in the classroom and school but also in the wider world beyond its gates (p. 220).
The front part is easy to go along with, it is the self-language that is of concern for those who have become sensitized to the psy-complex. Because as Martin and McLellan (2013) have shown, the practices around the psy-complex tend to create an imbalance of the personal over the social. What is even more concerning is that it is easy to read self-expression, self-development, and self-determination as parallel with the expressive, enterprising, and entitled student that Martin and McLellan (2013) have critiqued as more closely coupled with consumer capitalism than with concern for others and the environment.

Maybe the kind of site based educational development Kemmis and company are describing would help to balance the personal and the social goals. Their research kept pointing to significant learning achievements around concern for others and the environment, but I see no indication that their analysis proved that it started with self-expression, self-development, and self-determination. There’s something still a little utopian about all this. Biesta and Tedder’s (2007) anticipation of “a particular kind of learning that may help people to gain (more) control over and give (more) direction to their life, viz., learning that has to do with understanding and evaluating the composition, history and ‘ecology’ of one’s agentic orientations” (p. 139) is much more modest and is much less likely to be disruptive of local ecologies.

**Practice as Practical**

**No More Heroics**

I would suggest that if we are going to save education from its colonial impulses, we must give up trying to save the world through education. Educators who pay attention to analysts like Popkewitz (1998) will be haunted not only by the cruelty and neglect of
Canada’s residential school system, but also by its good intentions. Education for the full development of the human personality should work towards fostering the kinds of things that make for achieving agency in the interests of students learning resiliency. This is not education for emancipation or even for flourishing. If students can be in the place to understand and transform practice in their area, in their organizations, with their families and communities, maybe some might rise up and do world-changing things, but I have been arguing that a site based approach has to be intensely practical. Teachers and administrators practicing site based educational development will do the best with what they have and they will help their students and other members of the practice community do the same (see Whittington, 2011). Doing the best with what they have includes teachers and educational leaders learning to take an organizational perspective on the development of students, especially when it comes to matters of fostering secure attachment histories, resiliency, and agency. It also includes teachers becoming proficient at employing a practice scholarship of education as organization to help identify organizational levers for enabling change in practices, while supporting and reinforcing those practices that are working. These levers identified by practice theory are neither exogenous to nor independent of the organization — but are grounded in the micro-dynamics of everyday interactions and highlight the importance of all participants’ actions in producing organizational outcomes. Organizational interventions that are informed by such grounded micro-dynamics can be more directly relevant to the particular sites and particular practitioners involved (Feldman & Orlikowski, 2011).

**Interdependency**

Ideally, educationalists would enact site based educational development in an educational community practicing site based educational development. That’s one of the lessons of the interdependencies at play in ecologies of practices. If education is going to be changed, then the interdependencies between the different practice elements needs to
be attended to. Of course, this is not always possible, but that doesn’t leave the teacher or administrator caught between choosing to go along, enacting revolution, or withdrawing.

This is where critical participation action research will be of help:

Practice traditions are kept by institutions, professions, stewards. Action research aims at changing three things: practitioners’ practices, their understandings of their practices, and the conditions in which they practise. These three things—practices, how we understand them, and the conditions that shape them—are inevitably and incessantly bound together with each other. The bonds between them are not permanent, however; on the contrary, they are unstable and volatile. Neither practice nor understandings nor the conditions of practice is the foundation in this ménage. Each shapes the others in an endless dance in which each asserts itself, attempting to take the lead, and each reacts to the others (Kemmis, 2009, p. 463).

Educators educating for agency will themselves be learning and modelling the practices that support resiliency. This will include resisting the intrusions of other practices regimes (without making war) while finding and developing resources and supports in and around the educational site that will support site based educational development. Further,

to think of agency as achievement rather than as a ‘power’ also helps to acknowledge that the achievement of agency depends on the availability of economic, cultural and social resources within a particular ecology. In this sense we can say that the achievement of agency will always result from the interplay of individual efforts, available resources and contextual and structural ‘factors’ as they come together in particular and, in a sense, always unique situations. Methodologically an ecological approach to understanding agency thus focuses the attention on the unique configurations of such ‘factors’ (Biesta & Tedder, 2007, p. 137).

**Putting Practice Research into Practice**

**Children’s Agency**

One of my concerns is respecting the agency of children, especially when agency is not verbalized. If agency is the capacity to orchestrate sociomaterial transformation (see Ahearn, 2001; Eichner, 2014), then the pre-verbal infant that orchestrates the
attachment relationship is just as much an actor as the caregiver. While the infant initiates the relationship, it is the attentive responsiveness of the caregiver that is responsible for the quality of the relationship. Both of these terms—attentive and responsive—are practice words rather than singular actions or events. There are two main things that follow from the last sentence. First, as I’ve been trying to show throughout, there’s more to practice than meets the eye. I’ve been expanding the realm of practice research by looking for and highlighting words and concepts that belong in the same semantic field as practice. The second is related: once we see that attentive responsiveness is a practice arrangement, there’s a whole field that opens up in relation to teasing out what that means at 12 months, at 2 years and beyond. At 12 months, attentive responsiveness is made up of two main practices: helping the child modulate their feelings and encouraging the child’s agency. Again these aren’t events, they are skills. Another implication of attentive responsiveness being a practice arrangement is that attachment figures get lots of opportunity to learn in/through/by practice; the caregivers don’t have to fret about getting it right the first time. Another ramification: attentive responsiveness is what matters, no matter what the child is orchestrating. This means the two teloi: supporting emotional regulation and encouraging agency are always aspects of attentive responsiveness. This is not to say that they are the only or main matter-of-concern every time, but it must be emphasized that in the attachment relationship—caring for and caring about—are always matters-of-concern.

Attentive responsiveness is made up of many of the same elements that make for agentic orientation, which means that care-givers who practice attentive responsiveness are modelling an agentic orientation to the child. Attentive responsiveness is a practice-
approach; it is not a strategy. That being said, caregivers do employ strategies to make sure they are going to achieve attentive responsiveness more often, but strategies for attentive responsiveness that are helpful with 2-year-olds are likely to be counter-productive with 12-year-olds. This reinforces the importance of educating for agency and learning for resiliency.

**World Society Theory and Practice**

One of the original contributions of my dissertation is showing how to take a practice approach to existing social science theories that do not present as practice theories. If practices are the smallest and prior unit of social analysis, then it can be expected that almost all productive and accurate social analysis is analysis of practice, whether or not the analysis speaks in terms of practice. My process isn’t entirely unique. Those who have taken a re-turn to practice constantly appropriate earlier theories of practice and practice theories. What I’ve done is broaden the horizon to take up research projects dealing with significant activity patterns whether or not the authors understand the patterns as practices. Done rightly this would enrich twenty-first century practice theorizing at the same times it helps give substance to the research project under study. For example, Meyer et al. operate with a Durkheimian theory of the devolution of agency, but their longitudinal and cross-national research on the emergence of mass obligatory education doesn’t depend on that. At the same time, their Durkheimian perspective did permit them to see and elaborate the way that autonomous individualism is so much a part of late twentieth century learning society. Did they see more than is there? Yes, that is to be expected, but their findings about the persistence and prevalence
of the autonomous individual are supported by and support critical histories of the psy-
complex (see Rose; Popkewitz; Martin & McLellan; Hultqvist).

The concept of practice calls for developing vocabularies and approaches that
allow the transcendence of the division between such levels [as micro and macro],
such that we are able to understand practice as taking place simultaneously both
locally and globally, being both unique and culturally shared, ‘here and now’ as
well as historically constituted and path-dependent (Miettinen et al., 2009, p.
1310).

An inclusive approach to practice still requires particular conceptual tools to get at
practice. This is the import of Kemmis et al's models of practice architectures and
ecologies of practices. In the Australian school of ecologies of practices, the different
practice arrangements--learning, teaching, researching, leading, teaching teachers--are
understood as living entities that interact with one another in a particular ecology--the
educational complex. Researchers zoom in on the interactions by attending to the sayings,
doings, and relatings that happen within a particular school and among the surrounding
community and the larger educational context.

The focus of the Stanford School is on the educational complex as situated within
World Society. For Meyer et al., the ecology they are examining is World Society and the
entities they are studying are the nation state and worldwide models of institutional
entities like mass education and standardized individualism. Their concern is with the
worldwide models of isomorphism rather than with sayings, doings, and relatings and the
institutionalized patterns of conformity that emerge more from legitimizing scripts than
from overt coercion or functional rationality (J. W. Meyer et al., 1997, p. 145).

Practice belongs to a broad semantic field, including terms like process and
activity. There is a well-established cross-pollination going on between process theories
and activity theories (see Nicolini & Moteiro, 2017). A practice approach to reading,
appreciating, and appropriating other social theories will go beyond these close cousins. However, such an approach is not in the interests of theoretical hegemony, imposing a practice logic on other social theories, but rather it is an exercise in detecting and articulating empirical and grammatical affinities. Many social theories that contribute to discovering and elaborating significant activity patterns will share the same empirical concerns as practice theories. Taking a practice perspective of existing theoretical projects is not predatorial; it’s not a matter of conquering another research site or assimilation through appropriation. Practice theorists can appreciate the use of epistemic objects like Durkheim’s theory of devolution of agency for what they accomplish. This is not to say there is no discernment or that the discernment is merely pragmatic. It is that, and more. From a sociomaterial perspective, matter matters especially when it comes to what works.

There are theories of social analysis that have little to no affiliation with practice theories. Obviously, practice researchers will find little in common with theories that treat practice as inherently stultifying as well as those theories that maintain the split between structure and agency or the collective and the individual. Practice theories resolve those dualisms, but some folk are invested in maintaining them. What makes the practice approach so powerful is that practice theorists can make use of discoveries and insights wherever they are found.

**Limitations**

There are several limitations to my dissertation. For one thing it has been quite expansive and I have not always been able to grasp or vocalize what I can see. I have been explaining a history of development: development of the attachment relationship
and development of the student. I have been striving for transdisciplinary cohesion around practice theory, invoking attachment theory, sociology, organizational studies, cultural studies, critical theory, history, and hermeneutics. At the same time, even though the notion of autonomy is widely taken up in educational theory (see Callan, 1994; Carr, 2000; Cuypers, 1992; Dearden, 1984; J. White, 2003) and developmental psychology (see Erikson, 1968; Grolnick, 2009; Hill Jr, 1991; Piaget, 1952; Waterman, 1984), I have not fully engaged with the topic from these perspectives. Further, in the fields I do work with, my interlocutors are often on the periphery: DiMaggio and Powell are much more associated with neo-institutionalism than Meyer and Ramirez; Schatzki and Reckwitz’s philosophical work on practice is much more widely cited than Gherardi’s deeply reflective, well-researched, and complex work. Of all my major interlocutors, Sroufe is the one that comes close to having a canonical place in his field, but attachment theory, especially in the form Sroufe elaborates is itself peripheral in developmental psychology—despite the fact that the terms and concepts are now part of western folk psychologies.

**Outsiders Perspective**

Another limitation is that despite a status as older Anglo- hetero- male, I write as a kind of outsider. I suppose that, like many limitations, being an outsider has also been a strength that made this project possible. That I had not been initiated into the disciplinary concerns permitted me to see the patterns, connections, and horizons of possibilities that might be more obscured to others more devoted to the fields. At the same time, this dissertation has gone through many iterations as I have tried to respect the nuances of the terms in their various environments. What has made this matter even harder is the
number of abstract and plastic terms I have deployed throughout the dissertation. I have
been employing a highly abstract vocabulary in the interests of very particular concerns. I
argue for site based educational development but rely entirely on existing theoretical
research projects to make my case. I do this on the assumption that theoretical research
projects need to be understood as sites. This is a non-hierarchical perspective. The terms I
have been using—practice, agency, organization, development, education—are all plastic
terms; they shift their meaning constantly not just between fields but in fields. I’ve not
been interested in pinning these terms down, getting them to mean one thing. Rather, I’ve
been trying to show the connections between the research communities that deploy the
terms as a matter of concern. Development is not one thing, it is many things (Law,
2011c). It is easy to forget that and start looking for the real meaning of development.
From the practice perspective, a term like development is an epistemic object that travels
from and is put to use in different communities. A practice approach is not saying there is
one right way to understand development; quite the contrary, using terms like
development is an ongoing process that has a history and a future that is always situated
and negotiated in community. I’ve been working with multiple communities and the risk
is that the terms I’ve been using get turned around so many times that they become
entirely muddled, or on the other hand, that in the effort to get a handle on things I, or my
readers come to a conclusion on a singular use of the terms in play. There is also
something else that goes on; I’ve been taking a heuristic approach to practice theory. The
issue is not bringing to light overlooked truths or to establish a final position, but rather to
expand and to differentiate our conceptual framework of what can be sensed and of what
can become an object of analysis.
Neo-Foucaultian Analysis

While my work is influenced by neo-Foucaultian researchers (including Martin and McLellan but especially Nikolas Rose and John Law), my work is not Foucaultian per se. I understand Foucault, like Dewy, as a kind of cosmopolitan hero or “indigenous foreigner.” There are few places you can go in the world to read about autonomy, education, or psychology without running into Foucault. He travels well. I would consider Foucault to be doing the work of a futurist, but a futurist of a different kind. Most futurists are talking about a future that hasn't happened. Foucault reads history and uncovers the problems in a future that is already happening with “the greatest possible rigor, with the maximum complexity and difficulty, so that a solution does not arise at once” (Foucault, 1991, p. 158).

This dissertation will appear under-theorized as it engages a Foucaultian reading of the agonistic domain. However, taking an ecologies of practices approach permits me to read Foucault without being subject to his terms. Instead other vocabularies are given sway as I explore beyond antagonisms and take up the ecoconjunctions of attachment and assemblage. The organizational perspective on human development requires a different sensitivity when it comes to terms like subject, other, and care. Articulating assemblage involves exploring the hinterlands. Foucault himself showed us a way to do this in his later writings, but we do a disservice to Foucault when we treat his work as seminal rather than as rhizomatic. Reading Foucault with respect is to treat his work as offering points of departure. A point of departure can be an extension down a road not finished; or

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57 “Indigenous foreigner” is a term coined by Popkewitz to refer to folk who come from a distant land (or past) yet are treated as experts in addressing/justifying local discourse and problems (Popkewitz, 2005).
it can be following a road not taken; sometimes a point of departure can be a reversal; and in the world of Foucault, a point of departure can be more than one of these at the same time, or something completely different that cannot be seen until the journey’s end.

While accepting that we learn from the travelling Foucault "that what enables also constrains. [And even] caring relationships do not sit outside power-knowledge" (McWilliam, 2004, p. 146), the influence of the practice turn and attachment theory means that my work is more than “a critique of domination” and instead there is an appreciation for the “the ordinary competence of actors” as I engage “society, history and politics via a constructivist analysis of the concrete situation of action” (Vandenberghe, 2006, p. 70). I accept that power is inevitable and that rather than eradicating it, pastoral power must be administered with prudence. Part of that prudence requires that we work with accurate and helpful constructs of the person. By accurate, I mean things like: is empirically rigorous; will stand up to contestation (Rose, 1996, p. 55); and has strong explanatory and predictive capacity (Law, 1994, pp. 13–14). By helpful, I mean things like: can be translated into practices that ordinary people can participate in “without first having to learn a special or particular discipline or to meet standards or to pass exams set by those already acknowledged as experts” (Shotter, 1996, p. 6); and in this case can contribute to an alternate future (Gergen, 1996, p. 14) where there is more fruitful harmonizing of the personal and social goals of compulsory public education.

**Practice as Moving Target**

One of the biggest challenges for me is around the emergence of twenty-first century practice theorizing. When I first came across practice-based studies in my research I was immediately attracted to it, but I wasn’t fully able to understand how it fit
with my concern for disaggregating the autonomous individual from obligatory education without giving up on developmental psychology. At first I thought practice was not an integral project, something that was at best helpful to my understanding, but I kept being drawn back to it. In the end, I found out that approaching my subject through practice wasn’t just an aid to understanding my topic, it shaped the method of my approach to the other matters of interest: Sroufe’s organizational perspective on the development of the person and Meyer’s discovery of the key role that the autonomous individual plays in the learning society.

Since the re-turn to practice is so recent, there is always something new and important being published. Sometimes I feel like I would have been better off if I had started my PhD in 2014 rather than 2010. Several years back, my online research had introduced me to the practice work in Australia. But at that time, its focus was almost entirely on professional learning (see Dahlgren, Dahlgren, & Dahlberg, 2012) whereas my focus has been on obligatory education. With their focus on professional learning, they tended to invoke MacIntyre, COP, and the canonical second wave theorists. There was little acknowledgement of Schatzki or Reckwitz and none of Gherardi or Nicolini. As a consequence, I stopped following their work. Then Changing Practices, Changing Education (2014) showed up in one of my Google Scholar queries last year. Not only were the authors drawing heavily on Schatzki, they were engaging with Gherardi and demonstrating empirically what it was like to take a whole-sale approach to researching and theorizing educational practices. Kemmis and colleagues’ work shows up late in my dissertation, in part because it shows up late in my research.
As suggested above, my dissertation suffers from this grandiose engagement with obligatory education and autonomous individualism without dealing with canonical writers (including Dewey). Taking up site based educational development implies that teachers, educational researchers, and leaders be more focused on strategizing for site based educational development that educates for agency so that students can learn and enact resiliency. This means that they be less reliant on national and international experts who are universalizing, rationalizing, and strategizing around the autonomous individual. This is really quite modest, but in the modesty there’s a grandiose claim: that the way to save education and the world from ongoing colonial impulses in education is for educators to give up on heroics, they need to stop trying “to save the child for society and to rescue society through the child” (Popkewitz, 1997, p. 389; see also McWilliam & Lee, 2006).

Since practice theories regard practices as the smallest and prior unit of analysis they decenter the subject without deleting the individual (Reckwitz, 2002a). As such, Reckwitz invites a different approach to ethics as we bring the body and its affects back into play:

It does not seem out of place to assume that practice theory encourages us to regard the ethical problem as the question of creating and taking care of social routines, not as a question of the just, but of the ‘good’ life as it is expressed in certain body/understanding/things complexes. Ethics thus does not refer only to the relation between subjects, but also to the relation to things (including nature) and to oneself (including the body, the motivations and emotions)—a distinctive shift in relation to the utilitarian ethics of the homo economicus, the ethics of duties of the homo sociologicus, the existential ethics of mentalist subjectivism, . . . and the general scepticism towards ethics as it is furthered by mentalist objectivism and textualism (Reckwitz, 2002b, p. 259).

I have been arguing that practices of attachment lie at the intersection of all these relationships. Further, I have been suggesting that encouraging and developing agency
and resiliency would be one way that educators could work towards developing the human personality without entailing the autonomous individual. Further, a site based approach to educational development would be consistent with Reckwitz’ notion of ethics above. Even more, such an ecoethic of the good would challenge not only the false dichotomies of modernity but maybe also the cynicism and skepticism that can be found in various high and post-modern practices and theories.

Future Research

There have been several missed opportunities in my dissertation that would bear further consideration. Throughout my dissertation I have been pointing to the way that educators can work towards the full development of the person without entailing the autonomous individual. I have been using the United Nations declaration on the responsibility of educators to work towards “the full development of the human personality” to demonstrate this concern. But the UDHR (1948) also calls for “the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace” (Article 26, 2b). I have not covered that aspect in the dissertation, mainly because my research problem is related to the persistence and prevalence of the autonomous individual in obligatory education and not the UDHR. I use the UDHR to show there exists a global concern for the development of the human personality in obligatory education. That being said, I think much could be done (in either a longer paper or a new research project) to explore the relation between site based educational development and
educating toward “the full development of the human personality” in light of “strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.”

Another missed opportunity is exploring and explaining Gherardi’s ecological perspective on learning. It would be a worthwhile project to more fully elaborate her learning theory for public education. Related to this, I have not taken advantage of Vygotskiĭ, who contributes both to Nicolini’s toolkit approach and also to Sroufe’s organizational perspective. This is in addition to his particular contributions to learning theory. Hopwood and colleagues have been using CHAT in general and Vygotskiĭ in a number of research sites (Hopwood, 2010; Hopwood & Clerke, 2016; Hopwood, Day, & Edwards, 2016) but much more work could be done here.

By its very nature there are limitless opportunities for researching site based educational development from an ecologies of practices perspective. Every school, every classroom, every administration could be studied every year by students exploring ecologies of practices. What is more, such research would involve not only qualitative research but could involve quantitative or longitudinal research and even ongoing meta-analysis of practice-based research. At the same time, there is an obvious next step for my research. For example, critical action research programs that would involve local strategies for re-orienting and revitalizing more educational sites around an ecologies of practices approach to site based educational development. I can envision educational research or organizational learning programs that develop academic expertise in site based researching and strategizing around educating for agency. This would contrast with many existing programs focused on developing a cadre of experts in strategy and education for agency.
Other more specific research opportunities include a review of the methods I have practiced in this dissertation. Can the practice approach I have taken to analyzing and working with Meyer’s WST and Sroufe’s account of attachment theory be translated into analyzing other existing theoretical research projects? There is a new tool that is emerging around “computational reading” of e-sources that holds promise for doing grammatical analysis that would help in this work (Piper, 2013). More particularly, I’m interested in exploring whether I can publish transdisciplinary articles in the various fields I have engaged. Can I show organizational theorists of practice that Sroufe’s organizational perspective on development should be regarded as a theory of practice? Can I introduce twenty-first century practice theorizing to attachment theorists in the interest of helping them to examine Bowlby’s internal working model as part of social practice and not just internal mental activity? Beyond this, and beyond my research capabilities, is the question as to whether an ecologies of practices approach would have therapeutic value in helping to foster more resiliency in the face of trauma, addiction, and compulsion.

There is much to be done with taking a practice approach to agency as achievement. Biesta and Tedder’s (2007) theorizing and research around biographical learning in light of an ecological perspective of agency stands as an exemplar. Biesta (2010) has elaborated on “Dewey’s communication theory of meaning” as social practice (p. 715) and it would be helpful to see that how that can be developing in light of twenty-first century practice theorization. It would also be helpful to revisit Biesta and Tedder’s

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58 See Wellmon (2015) for someone who takes a practice approach to studying the Enlightenment project using computational reading as one of his research tools.
work on agency with a focus on educating children or youth. What would it look like to do site based educational development around developing skills in “formulating projects for the future” (Emirbayer & Mische, 1998, p. 978); engaging a “schematizing process” in recalling the past (p. 978); “structuring relationships” and “contexts of action” (p. 1004); “exploring and reconstructing contexts of action” (p. 1008); “exercising different mediating influences” (p. 1008); and “fusing, extending, and transforming . . . received schemas” (p. 1009)?

**Conclusion**

Throughout my dissertation I have been showing both how practice can be studied as an object and how practice can be used as an epistemology. I have explored the way practice talk is perspective-taking/making. For the practice approach, it is not practice over theory or theory over practice, but theory as practice. As such, the practice approach dethrones academics; the philosopher has no claim to the monarchy. But even as the practice approach dethrones academics, it shows us how to honour the skills of scholarship and to appreciate how different schools, fields, projects, approaches, and disciplines can be regarded as ecologies of practices.

Practice research is situated, textured, and descriptive; it puts tradition in its place, “to see our practices as making and remaking the world of yesterday, in the world of today, with more or less predictable consequences for how we will live in the world of tomorrow, is to see our practices as existing in *practice traditions*” (Kemmis, McTaggart, et al., 2014c, p. 78). In this sense, tradition is neither the source of genuine human wisdom nor does it chain people to the past:

The reality of social practices is revealed not as a-temporal presence. It is a reality that is always disclosed within a characteristic hermeneutic situation that by
circumscribing the fore-having, the fore-sight, and the fore-conception of a tendency of choosing possibilities brings into being a definite regime of social practices’ situated temporalization. Within this regime, the present is a function of a ‘constructive future’ (appropriated possibilities) and a past that is always in statu nascendi (a past that is disclosed with regard to the actualized possibilities). The reality of social practices is in a state of constant temporalization as informed by characteristic hermeneutic situations (Ginev, 2013, pp. 14–15).

Dissertating itself is an example of all this. It is part of a set of practice traditions and as I conclude, I am conscious that I could have given practices like the literature review more attention. Still, I offer up this project for full consideration. Whatever is uniquely present or missing should not be regarded as either brilliant innovation or merely idiosyncratic, but as a series of resilient moves. Dissertating from beginning to end is about choosing one set of possibilities over others. And so I choose to end here. There is much that has not being said; much that remains to be said; but there is no more to be said, for now.
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