Making Practical Notions of Pedagogical Theorizing

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In my many years of working with young children, their speech and conversations continually impress me as witty observations and perplexing but powerful statements suggesting consistent eloquence and developing articulate capacities. Other times, baffled by their talk, I have had typical adult skepticism that what children have to say does not hold any larger significance or pedagogical relevance. It is this seemingly ambiguous stance toward children's language that has drawn me to child language research.

In 1982 I came to graduate school at the University of Alberta. It was through the research seminars with Max van Manen, that I became acquainted and challenged to probe further into a more critical, reflective, and interpretive look at children's language. I began to see a clear and rigorous context for thinking about children and pedagogy. Through a phenomenological frame, children's language became for me a rich source of practical pedagogical understanding.

I have been influenced by readings of Gadamer, Merleau-Ponty, Georges Gusdorf, David Michael Levin, and Vygotsky. In the pedagogical context, I have been stimulated by the critical thinking of Maxine Greene, Henry Giroux, Paulo Freire, and by British language educators such as Margaret Meek, and James Briton.

My current research on literature, cognition and culture is provoked by questions relevant to the young child's lived experience of reading in a language other than his or her own. I am interested in the child's experience of text, as their reading enables them to make new connections between language and cultural experience.

We read theories into everything. And once a theoretical scheme has been brought to life we tend to search for principles (nomos) that seem to organize the life to which the theory was brought. In our efforts to make sense of lived-experiences with theories and hypothesizing frameworks we are forgetting that it is living human beings who bring schemas and frameworks into being and not the reverse. (van Manen, 1985).

The intent of this article is to explore notions of pedagogical theorizing, attempting to clarify its linkage and its connections to practice. I derive my notions of pedagogical theorizing from van Manen's (1985) description of this event:

> In addition to our practical pedagogic experiences which involve in a deep sense a speaking to children, we also must at times think and speak about the manner in which we choose to speak about children. The latter activities we refer to as pedagogical theorizing [which is] the attempt to bring to speech the everyday experiences of living with young children. (p. 13)

This manner of our speaking to children rates significantly in the processes of pedagogy, if we are concerned about how we stand in our task as educators. Van Manen's description of pedagogical theorizing turns the spotlight on this *bringing to speech*, in a way this *bringing to language*, that which is the fabric of everyday experiencing that weaves our being with and living with children.

This article arises out of my personal and professional interest in the teaching-learning process, striving to affirm the moments that come close to what one may call "those pedagogic moments" (van Manen, 1989). The aim of this article is to find arenas for conversation and dialogue, for the articulation of how one makes sense of our place in the pedagogic event. To find spaces where we can explore multiple perspectives on the teaching-learning experience, be active in our theorizing and, out of this, locate viewpoints which suggest possibilities out of which a practical, theoretical, and edifying forum may emerge.

This investigation is described through the languaging of some university students who I had the opportunity to work with particularly in my courses on Theories of Child Development and Research Methods in Education. It is through the languaging (theorizing) of the students that I seek to understand my own sense-making, hence my own theorizing. I find myself moving back and forth between the students' sense-making (theorizing) and my own theorizing.

Thus this article comes as if in a double story. It requires the effort to come to understand pedagogic theorizing, not so much in the sense of an objectifiable, measureable facticity of knowing, but rather in the ontological sense of the word *to understand* as in its Middle English meaning *to stand under*. There is an illuminating explication of this Middle English sense of this word, described effectively by Travers (1985):

> To understand: for years I pondered on that word and tried to define its effect on myself. At last I came to the conclusion that what it means is the opposite of what it says; to understand is to stand under. Later I discovered that this was in Middle English. So in order to come to something with my unknowing, my nakedness, if you like: I stand under it and let it teach me, rain down its truth upon me. (p. 199)

I take up these notions of my own sense-making probing into pedagogic theorizing by focusing on three thematic structures of (a) poking at the usual: a new knowing; (b) attentiveness: a listening without resistance; and (c) the bearing of thought: a pedagogic posture.

Poking at the Usual: A New Knowing

One of the focal points of interest that I integrated in my course on Theories of Child Development was a special attention drawn to the world of childhood and to the child's own languaging. The students were encouraged to watch young children, to be participant observers in the ways of childhood doings, to locate childhood ways, to be where the children are in their laughter, their anger, their bewilderment, and in the vitality of the child's lived experiencing.

The project of child-watching initiated the students to the phenomenon of children languaging, listening closely to their talk and listening again. Listening became the point of departure on which the students were ushered into the theorizing domain of their learning experience. These child-watching times brought the students to many places. They found the young children in the shopping malls, they heard them at play in the park, at times in an adventuresome chase, other times noisy and rowdy in their games, sometimes daring or challenging, at times scared perhaps to take up the dare in play. On rare occasions they met children still fortunate enough to have a safe and spacious backyard to build their fort and revel in the thrill of childhood play with a playground arena of trees, grass, and a vast sky to "lose oneself in play" (Gadamer, 1968). They noticed toddlers in their crying and weariness at carnivals and fairs, infants restless in baby strollers that were often equally laden with parents' souvenir shopping or with other sundry paraphernalia.

There were also the children they came to know in hospitals. These were children too ill to taste the vitalizing pulse of an energetic, healthy childhood. Students watched as a helpless parent attempted to soothe away the pain that the child called these "bumps" all over her body. There was Tracey, the four-year-old girl with leukemia who turned to the nurse and cried, "You lied to me, you said the needle wouldn't hurt."

We reflected in our seminar discussions how a caregiver handles these difficult and painful experiences with children. Does our pedagogic caring at times push us to disguise from children the actuality of experiences? How can we as teachers be tactful and thoughtful as well as be efficient in carrying our tasks in the educative process? It constantly amazed us that these children although terminally ill, viewed this world, as Malouf (1985) would say with that unique quality of a young person "still wonderfully afflicted with childhood."

Students also met the children in the school grounds huddled in riveting conversations, boys and girls figuring out the rules of a game they had just created. And they watched in fascination the intricate organization with which the children carried out the entire structure of their new game. And later, when the first signs of December snow arrived, they watched the young child enjoy that exciting spectacle of the holidays,

happily perched on Daddy's shoulders, for a grand view of the Santa Claus Parade.

The students' responses to their child-watching varied. At times they responded to the child's languaging with characteristic delight, with laughter, and sometimes with confusion. Some students responded with sheer skepticism typical of adults with respect to children's talk and their childlike ways.

Of course, there was the ubiquitous response of writing off this course activity as rather trivial, because at this point in the students' sense-making, like the average adult, they doubted that there was any larger intellectual significance, much less pedagogic relevance, in what young children had to say about their experiences of the world.

However, these skeptical attitudes were difficult to sustain. As the students pursued the course requirement activities, their poking into the usual surrounds of the everyday opened up the world of the child through a new lens. There occurred a new recognition of the child, a shifting awareness of children and their ways. A new knowing. In *Truth and Method* Gadamer (1975) invites us to think of the structure of lived experiencing, demonstrating a shifting in one's awareness. Gadamer elucidates on the possibility of new knowing:

> But we do not understand what recognition is in its profoundest nature, if we only see that something that we know already is known again. The joy of recognition is rather that more becomes known than is already known. In recognition what we know emerges, as if through an illumination, from all chance and variable circumstances that condition it and is grasped in its essence. (p. 103)

This shift in awareness is not a mere shift as in a whim. Rather, the new knowing is best described by an enlargement of one's perspective, an enlightenment because now one knows more than was previously known. This increase in one's knowing complements and validates what is deservedly now called the joy of recognition. There is a "reversal of one's structure of awareness," a new knowing, a heightened awareness wherein one's knowing is accompanied by an unknowing and begins to focus on the possibilities and potentialities of the experience. In an earlier research study I described this new knowing as a "sensitizing of impressions, feelings, and thinking" (Lim-Alparaque, 1986, p. 19).

And this process of sensitizing is an opening up to experience so that there occurs a disclosing of things, rather than a foisting on of a mere assemblage of facts. This disclosing can be compared to the image of the musical composer who delicately intervenes within the lyrical disclosing of the piece he or she composes, and yields to the music he or she eventually brings to life in a song.

While poking at the usual everyday encounters with children the students' languaging revealed their engagement in the ways of childhood. The students became practical cogitators in learning about their very own learning, not too far from the familiar surroundings of the everyday. In their child-watching, the students commented thus:

I never really thought that there is so much going on in children's games, way beyond the obvious. And to think that you hear so much of their language from hide and seek, such a simple game!

I seem to run into a lot of children these days. But I guess they've been around me a lot all this time, only I never really noticed them before.

I was babysitting this past weekend and it's funny but I find myself paying close attention to their game of hide and seek. On the surface, the game appears unsophisticated but you learn a lot about children through their game.

I remember hearing this conversation at the shopping mall from two sisters, about six years of age and the younger probably four years. The girls must have "lost" their mother for a moment in the crowd, and the younger girl turned to her sister and said, "Hold on a minute I need to go to the washroom." Then without any hesitation, she looked around and approached a store clerk, and said, "Excuse me ma'am, do you have a ladies' room in this store?" I think children are just wonderful!

The students were inevitably drawn to question, respond or simply be taken in by the languaging of children. The students noted young children piecing together facets of their world through asking, telling, or storying. They heard children question their impressions of things in languaging that mirrored their expressive and poetic grasp of language, and of children gradually acquiring this ability to organize their thinking within the abstract frame of the languaging experience.

The way children express themselves is something I have noticed in my observations. Yesterday this one pre-schooler asked a question which was really simple, but she asked it in a way that the teacher had to take a minute or so to make sure she responded not only to the factual part of the question but to the expressive part as well. The child had asked: "Teacher, where does the moon go when it breaks in half?"

My daughter who's six years of age, told me that Batman was showing in town and when I asked her at what theater, she just said right away "at a theater near you!"

Melissa asked this question in Sunday school yesterday; "If Jesus is God then how come He prays to God?" I think children do ask similar questions but they phrase it in a different way, one needs to listen carefully to the question otherwise you miss the focus of the question. I think children ask very good questions and they certainly don't just ask "why." Their asking comes in many forms.

A shifting in awareness, a recognizing, a reknowing. As the students' child-watching proceeded subtly toward a spark of direction, a hint of thought, they now found the ordinary everyday events significant to probe and to question. A promise of possible openings gradually became available for the students' exploration. The students were now "onto something."

In her book *The Dialectic of Freedom*, Greene (1988), reminds us of the event of being "onto something" in a scene from Walker Percy's narrator in the film *The Moviegoer.*

> What is the nature of the search? you ask? Really it is very simple, at least for a fellow like me, so simple that it is easily overlooked. The search is what anyone would undertake if he were not sunk in the everydayness of his own life. This morning, for example, I felt as if I had come to myself on a strange island. And what does such a castaway do? Why, he pokes around the neighborhood and he doesn't miss a trick. To become aware of the possibility of the search is to be onto something. (1979, p. 13)

Poking into their everyday surroundings the students found something significant to research. The students opened themselves to spaces for the articulation of thinking (theorizing), at times accompanied by a questioning. Child-watching allowed them to locate openings for reframing and enlarging their understanding of young children.

Children were introduced in our class discussions on theories of child development. We reflected on the experiences of Samantha, Danielle, Nicole, David, and Katrina, We discussed the languaging of René, Isela, Edgar, Paulie, twins Cassie and Katie. There was Chris, Dustin, Joseph, Tiffany, Edgar, Rosendo, Pete, and Bonnie: an entire roster not only of names, but of real young children brought alive in our class discussions through the students' theorizing echoing the verve of childhood experiencing.

As the students thoughtfully reflected on their encounters with these young children, layers of a new knowing revealed that which was once hidden by a film of familiarity and the routineness of things. They noticed children almost everywhere, on the bus, down the block, the paper boy, even cousins, nephews and nieces (who in the past were usually ignored) when they came for an occasional Sunday visit. The students' familiar world had now taken on a shift in perspective. The familiar now started to present new possibilities.

Inside our classroom the familiar world of childhood was talked about in new ways taking a shift in standpoint from the taken-for-granted to varying possibilities for pedagogic understanding. Listening to the students' discussions they now described portraits of young children not with language couched in textbook terminology such as "this child is at a preoperational level" and so forth. Comments about children were not in obscure jargon found in evaluation forms teachers have to submit to the

principal's office for budget approval, forms that identify children only as slow learners, or learning disabled, or T.A.G. kids, even S.A.D. pupils (roughly translated, S.A.D. stands for Severe Attention Deficit). Rather, children were talked about as children and as dynamic meaning-makers of their own lived experiencing.

Our seminar discussions considered Taylor, the young boy Paula met at the mall, who kept a rather hassled parent trying hard to cope with the active three-year-old. We heard stories of Donna and Colin's questions about where does Jesus live? And their friend Jeremy's response that Jesus lived very far away, carefully phrasing his four-year-old grasp of language in such a way as to present his explanations clearly to his friends.

There was Samantha in preschool, a usually vibrant and enthusiastic student in class, but surprisingly for a whole week suddenly sullen and refusing to participate in any of the class activities.

And Staci told us about Anthony, the six-year-old child she was tutoring. Anthony couldn't pass the school district's qualifying exam for grade 1. When Anthony met Staci, his first comment was: "Teacher, I'll do anything to pass Kindergarten."

These vignettes of children's doings brought about an interesting flow of discussion as we attempted to make sense of our experiences with young children and matters of pedagogy. Taylor's episode triggered many responses from the students on the ubiquitous problem of how to cope with the physically active child, especially when shopping.

I wonder what we can really do about the child we bring to the shopping mall. I don't want to lose my kid in the mall. But I also hate having to put her on a leash like a dog. But then again, do I really have a choice?

I'd really like to find ways and means to help the poor parent who's struggling with her shopping and her toddler. There must be a better way of keeping one's child safe, and still keep your sanity intact!

When we were very young, I remember Mom used to ask us to help her put the groceries in the shopping cart. I guess this kept my sister and I busy and we enjoyed her shopping without giving our mother as difficult time. Besides we were often reminded about the way we were expected to behave at the store. I guess once children are old enough to understand they do understand about expectations.

Problems such as babysitting services presented thoughtful alternatives for consideration. We discussed the pros and cons of using child leashes that are now commercially available. Personal experiences and memories became the best source of many practical suggestions.

We talked about Samantha in preschool and attempted to figure out her sudden change of behavior. Examining and reflecting on the experiences of Samantha revealed that she was upset that the teacher had altered the

entire physical arrangement of the classroom during the school semester break. Samantha and the other children had come back to an unfamiliar classroom that they no longer recognized and somehow Samantha was terribly upset that she had "lost" her classroom. Our sense-making of Samantha's experience led us to reflect on how a teacher can respond in such situations. In what way does the teacher stand in the presence of her students so as not to alienate them in the teaching-learning process? In what practical way could Samantha's teacher have avoided the child's feeling of being alienated from the teaching-learning process itself? What aspects of children's lived experience of space was Samantha trying to reveal to us teachers? We considered closely the nature of the reciprocity of the pedagogic event, seeing that we as educators needed to be mindful that there is both a leading by the adult and a recommending by the child in matters of pedagogy.

We talked about Anthony, the six-year-old boy who desperately wanted to pass kindergarten. We listened closely to what Anthony was telling us both in what he said and did not say. We wondered whether administrators, school psychologists and diagnosticians who plan exams for students ever meet the children themselves who take these exams. Which items of the eligibility exam did Anthony miss? Did missing these items paint a true picture of Anthony's capability to succeed or fail in grade 1?

Many students were concerned, others appalled, that one exam actually overshadowed all the rest of the lived experiences of the young child in kindergarten. Was this system forcing both students and teachers into the manipulation of a curriculum that had the year end exam as its overriding objective?

> So much of education today in this country is geared to quantifiable results. So you have the whole battery of testing that has become, in the massive bureacratic system which we have in our state schools, the measure of success or failure. The teacher is placed in a situation where he or she has no choice except to teach to these quantifiable norms—and at the sacrifice of real education, and often to the deep frustration of the real teachers. (Barnes, 1990, p. 31)

We wondered whether curriculum developers had ever looked into children's eyes and seen the fear of failure at six years of age. Why were these kindergarten students subjected to exams in order to enter grade 1? As we read a news clipping of one State requiring grade 1 eligibility exams for kindergarteners we wondered why the administrators did not look at the child's year in kindergarten instead of one examination to determine the child's entrance into grade 1?

The students' questioning echoed Greene's (1978) postulations when she spoke of imagination and aesthetic literacy: "It is important, when we consider integrations and wholeness to break with such notions as those that split the cognitive from the emotional, the rational from the affective capacities" (p. 188).

We discussed at length the pedagogical objectives of testing, compared possible ways of testing children's knowledge and looked into different testing practices such as in the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, and Japan. Later student seminars produced quite interesting and substantive poster presentations on the otherwise staid topic of testing in our schools.

Perhaps the obstacles that we encounter as educators are subtly intertwined within the bureaucratic frames of our educational systems. Greene (1989), points this out succinctly:

> In schools, like other institutions, there are memos, not actual barriers to reflective practice. There are conference and commission reports, not barbed wire fences in the way. There are assured, helpful, bureaucratic faces, not glowering antagonists to growth and freedom and an enlarged sense of being in the world. The weight is only dimly felt; yet, for many it is accepted as what Milan Kundera describes: It must be; *es muss sein*. (p. 15)

In a way, these were the barriers in our classrooms that we needed to overcome and push back in order to allow for openings that spoke of possibilities—rather than rigid curricula and system standardization.

Attentiveness: Listening Without Resistance

> Try what I am saying, and you will see how quickly your mind can learn. You can hear a song or a sound and let the mind be so completely full of it that there is not the effort of learning. After all if you know how to listen to what your teacher is telling you about some historical fact, if you can listen without resistance because your mind has space and silence and is therefore not distracted, you will be aware not only of the historical fact but also of prejudice with which he may be translating it and of your own inward response. (Krishnamurti, 1990, p. 31)

My exploration of this event of pedagogic theorizing started with the focus on the subthematic structure of "Poking at the usual: a new knowing" I now move on to describe "Attentiveness: listening without resistance." I believe that as we pursue specific paths of inquiry in our attempt to understand children and the pedagogic process, the participatory nature of teaching-learning require of us a certain kind of attention. It requires of us an attentiveness to the child, to the contexts of the child's lived experiences, to the child's languaging, to the network of interactions that take place in our encounters with the young child. It implies that to be able to speak in an authentic manner about children, and our pedagogic task, there is required of us a consistent attentiveness granting the audibility of voices to that which was voiced and not voiced.

The description quoted at the beginning of this section renders an excellent starting point regarding the structure of such attentiveness. I believe that it expresses eloquently the kind of attention we need if we are to profit from our pedagogic theorizing. This attentiveness echoes

Gadamer's (1975) comment that a great listener is "one who listens not only to what is said but what comes to light in the speaking" (p. 165).

To start to describe this fresh and sensitive quality of attentiveness we look to its workings in young children. We are all familiar with this scene of rapt attention in young children like that of Holly, a three-year-old.

I remember Holly, the daughter of a friend in Los Angeles. I distinctly remember the afternoon we were on our way to the Los Angeles airport, with Holly at the back of the van. It took us so long to get to the airport and we spent hours going through the heavy traffic typical of the Los Angeles freeway. All this time Holly sat at the back of the van without any fuss at all. She was intensely and happily riveted in creating designs: whirls and twirls with a piece of string on a twig.

Ordinarily Holly is a rather active and energetic three-year-old. But despite that long and tiresome trip, Holly found the space and the silence in her mind to be attentive. And without being distracted she yielded to the gathering of the moment in attentiveness. Holly yielded to the space and the silence and attentively her mind was alert to the texture, the lines and the colors that shifted in changing patterns as she designed and redesigned patterns on the twig with a piece of string.

It is no longer easy for us adults to capture the unique attentiveness evident in many young children like Holly. Is it perhaps because our minds are crowded with distractions that we find it difficult to yield to the space and silence in experiencing things. But what is it like to have this attention that is listening without distractions? In our talking about children we want a listening that is not a wandering. We want a rigorous kind of listening that comes to the phenomenon with attendance, yet is not distracted.

Students in my Research Methods in Education classes often attended to the children's talk as they examined various research interests. In their encounters with young children and listening to their talk, they sharpened their sensitivities to what the child was saying and what the child was not saying. They attempted to figure out not what the child meant in his or her talk, but rather what the child's languaging revealed of his or her impressions of things and how to relate this effectively to their pedagogic relationship with children.

Beth, one of my graduate students, was struggling to get Rosendo to talk about his experience of learning to read. Rosendo never really talked specifically about learning to read and yet he shared with Beth many other stories about his sisters, his mother and his friends. Beth, however, was focused on getting Rosendo to talk specifically about his early reading experiences. Because Beth was not hearing anything specific about his perceptions of his own reading experience, she decided to read more closely the transcripts of talk she had acquired from Rosendo. A month later, after reading and rereading the transcripts and listening to the

tapes over and over again, Beth discovered that Rosendo's stories were indeed his own way of responding to Beth's inquiries about his reading experiences, but they were all subtly interwoven inside the other stories he told of his family, and friends. When Rosendo spoke of his Mexican family, his friends, and when he told Beth in detail how he learned to dance, it was clearly the child's larger picture of his experience of learning to read in a bilingual setting.

Perhaps in Beth's re-searching she finally found the space and silence in her mind to accommodate all that was audible in Rosendo's story including the listening to that which was inaudible. Having the space now in her mind to listen fully to Rosendo, Beth's attentiveness was a listening to the silence within the spoken languaging.

Like one listening to the ringing of the carrillon on a university campus, Beth was now listening to the sound of the bells as well as to the silence between the ringing of the bells. This time the attention that Beth was giving Rosendo no longer held a resistance in blocking off the other stories. Beth's attention was now alert and totally aware of the wider contexts of Rosendo's languaging.

In my courses I tried some practical ways of nurturing a kind of active attentiveness to the required readings. One of the activities we tried in class was a reading of certain themes in van Manen's book, *The Tone of Teaching*. I asked the students in class to attend to one quote: "All children come to us bearing the gift of experiencing the possible" (van Manen, 1985).

I handed out large sheets of newsprint to each student and asked them to work in groups of three. The simple instructions for the activity were to respond to the basic outline of: Basic ideas, Reactions, and Insights.

First, the students were invited to read and reread the quote, and the groups were encouraged to list as many categories of impressions, meanings, feelings, questions, statements, conflict, comparisons, and so forth that they could locate in the quote. It helped when the students were guided to list the obvious ideas first and promptly write them down. We spent the first hour of the session simply listing these ideas in menu-like fashion. Soon the students had some 50 categories derived from this one quote. Group discussions went like this:

"Bearing." Why did the author use "bearing" and not carrying or giving?

The word "bearing" reminds me of the three kings bearing gifts. There's something regal, special about the children coming to us with this gifts.

Possible that really includes the impossible. A lot of experiencing.

The possible in this sense may also imply hope perhaps? Think of being able to consider even the impossible.

All children, not just some or a group but all children. No categories, no labels.

All implies everyone regardless of who they are. I would include a section on reciprocity here too. This is implied in the phrase come to us. To come to someone means there is someone who does the coming and another at the receiving end. There's the child and the adult. What is the nature of this relationship between the adult and the child?

I guess this is what we were talking about earlier when we discussed the word pedagogy. Everything seems to connect in here ... ideas, concepts.

Who does the coming? How do the children come? Trusting perhaps that the person they come to will welcome this gift.

Does anyone have a question about the gift? What does it mean to have a gift? We should list down all the qualities that belong to gifts.

What constitutes a gift? How does the recipient of this gift respond? How should one respond when we receive this gift?

Does this affect our curriculum? In what way does it affect the curriculum?

If we take these thoughts we have talked about thus far our agenda for curriculum will surely be affected. One thing for sure, it will be different from the one prescribed by the State. Or maybe not. It will just be approached differently.

I would place a section on the tense he uses in this statement. You've got: "come, bearing, experiencing" all in the active tense. It gives an interesting meaning to the words.

In this age of technology and the pressure to succeed and perform how do we as adults respond to the caring and nurturing of these gifts.

I remember in high school when my teachers told me that I had a lot of potential for success. Actually it scared me when she told my parents that I would go places. What if I simply wanted to be me? I wasn't interested in going places!

Sometimes I really wonder about all these gifted programs. What does it mean to be gifted? I had a friend who was so talented in playing the piano. But she was the loneliest person I have ever met. She went through so much pressure to perform all those years. Now she lives on lithium!

"Possible" and "possiblities" are better words than potential I think. We need to look up those words. There are shades of meanings there that make a difference.

I think when we speak about the possible in teaching we are opening up things. On the other hand when we simply talk about potential then we place some kind of pressure on the children. Maybe that's why we say "to live up one's potential." I like the sound of possibilities better.

From the random talk and brainstorming of initial ideas and reactions the next session found the groups delineating into fewer headings related

ideas under the larger thematic categories. Then they were asked to respond to the ideas they had listed by writing statements or brief accounts of their own reactions to the notions and ideas in their categories. Varying accounts were suggested by the groups.

We spent two subsequent three-hour sessions discussing the many reactions written by different students in the groups. And to wrap up the activity students selected a theme that he or she wanted to write about in an essay.

Perhaps the theme that many of the students wrote about was the notion of what it means to say "experiencing the possible." One thing that almost always became clear when students had gone through this activity was that of experiencing surprise that they had something to say and a great deal to talk about based on their experiencing once they had given thoughtful attention to their reading. More importantly, because they actively attended to their readings, the students were able to ask several important and intelligent questions.

> Through attentiveness to their reading the students found not so much answers but questions. Like the scientist's discovery after a rigorous research study; "it is not so much that the answers are unimaginable, the questions are unimaginable" (Singer, 1989, p. 403).

In our pedagogic theorizing, we strive for the kind of attentiveness to things that allows us to make sense of our experiencing but also to locate important, relevant, yet unimaginable questions to pursue. Our attentiveness in theorizing unites the harmony of thinking in articulations already heard and those in the process of being expressed.

> Listeners reperforming the work within their own stream of consciousness are enabled to uncover aspects of themselves they never suspected, even as they achieve communion with an artist and by means of that communion discover new expressive qualities in the world. (Greene, 1979, p. 200)

The quality of attentiveness the students experienced in their readings facilitated their introduction to other texts. Berg's books *Look At Kids* and *Reading and Loving* provided helpful readings for the class. We looked at Berg's (1965) illuminating examples of the languaging of young children that most often hovers between the expressive and the poetic continuum of language experience. As in their drawings, young children paint a picture of things not in an attempt to correspond to the practical portrait of reality, but rather according to how they experience things and where their feelings and thoughts mesh as one.

The discussions generated by Berg's writings spilled over into fascinating, sometimes confusing, and unresolved considerations of what other authors had to say about children and pedagogy. There were sessions we spent talking about Paley's examples of children's languaging in *Wally's Stories*. Matthews' book *Dialogues For Young Children* was another

book that provided a good base for further inquiry into the landscape of childhood.

The practical examples from the students' child-watching were thus complemented with their seminar sessions on the students' readings of Berg's *Look At Kids,* Donaldson's *Children's Minds,* Greene's *Landscapes of Learning.* Van Manen's *Tone of Teaching,* Smith's *Giftedness,* Travers' *The Unknowing,* Suransky's *The Erosion of Childhood,* Barritt, Beekman, and Mulderij's "Hide & Seek and Peek-a Boo," Paley's *Wally's Stories,* William's *Dialogues For Young Children* and other writings in phenomenological pedagogy.

For some students the readings of various text and research materials shifted from the cumbersome task of fulfilling course reading requirements to that of genuine interest in what the author had to say about children. It was for some a reading to clarify their own meanings, to verify and validate their own experiences. Perhaps for others they had now found the space and silence in their thinking to reflect on these significant encounters with text.

Conclusion

In this article I attempt to describe my experience of theorizing about children and pedagogy. It is my attempt to locate practical standpoints from which to theorize and make sense of our place in their lives in pedagogic relationships. These notions are by no means conclusive because as in the hermeneutic experience of theorizing we have really only leaped into the circle of trying to understand our role as pedagogues.

For those who are authentically interested, pedagogy requires gestures grounded in the continuing search for openings in our lived experiencing, in investigating new discourses, locating spaces with startling recognitions and new ways of seeing. Our stance, our gait, our thinking comportment must articulate the capacity for tactful, informed, and caring touch. Our pedagogic posture must bring forth a capacity to be moved by truth, beauty and excellence.

I close with the challenge contained in Lawrence Lightfoot's words:

> Good teachers come in all forms and express themselves very differently. Teachers don't always connect successfully with all the thirty kids in a classroom. But I think one thing all good teachers have in common is that they regard themselves as thinkers, as existing in a world of ideas. This is true for a nursery teacher and a professor in the most distinguished university. The currency is ideas—but ideas as conveyed through relationships. (1989, p. 159)

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