

A CALL TO ACTION:
MAPPING THE TERRAIN OF EMANCIPATORY PEDAGOGY

by

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A Call to Action: Mapping the Terrain of Emancipatory Pedagogy

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ABSTRACT

In this thesis, I critically examine how my lived experience has influenced my teaching practice. I locate myself as central to my inquiry, and relate the conditions of my oppression within the landscapes of school and home in my subject-positions as woman, teacher and mother. I reveal the circumstances of my own subordination in order to contextualize and substantiate my assertion that children's lived experiences are both obscured and dismissed by the institution of the school as it presently exists. I argue for pedagogical practice that both honours and acts upon the daily realities of the lives of children who are required to become students.

This thesis is primarily composed of narratives which I have based upon fieldnotes, my personal journal, and transcripts of interviews that I conducted with children who were my students. I have drawn upon both phenomenology and ethnography to enable me to write my own stories, and to relate stories about the lives of others. I have endeavoured to seek ways to relate the lived experiences of others without violating the integrity of their individual realities.

My thesis documents one way to map the terrain of emancipatory pedagogy, and does not presume to be conclusive. Rather, its intent is to explore an alternative method of pedagogical inquiry, one that pursues the possibilities for individual freedom within the institution of the school. Finally, it invokes a call to action upon all teachers to seriously and reflectively pursue pedagogical practice that resists domination and oppression.

DEDICATION

For Ted and Tim, my sons, with love.

*And when the telling is done, and the voices
of the voiceless are heard, does storytelling
not invoke a call to action?*

Polakow, 1985:826

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Finally, I thank all of the women and children I have met over the years whose lived experiences have helped me to struggle through the battles of subordination and oppression, and whose memories I carry with me as I continue my journey towards discovering important and empowering truths and possibilities.

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Chapter One

A CALL TO ACTION

This is the place to start, for that is where the children are. For only a hard look at the world in which they live - a world which we adults have created in large part by default - can convince us of the urgency of their plight and the consequences of our inaction (Bronfenbrenner, 1970:165).

I am a teacher of young children. Since the beginning of my teaching career, seven years ago, I have sought ways to enable young children to raise their own voices. For the first three or four years I did not really question or investigate my motive, nor ask myself why it was important to me that my students should somehow become empowered to speak for themselves. I simply responded to and acted upon my intuitive sense that being the teacher did not and should not afford me any inherent privilege to determine what the young children in my care might need to know and express. It seemed to me that somehow, somewhere, there was a place for me as teacher, who inherently becomes an embodiment of the institution of the school, to seek ways to honour and address their individual lived experiences. That is, I resisted the possibility of viewing my class as a collective, conglomerate whole, individually lifeless, faceless and

voiceless, defined only by their mutual inclusion in my classroom. I was drawn, instead, to the possibility of viewing my class as a group of individuals each of whom had their own life-story to tell, and whose individual life stories necessarily contributed to the unique landscape that we collaboratively constructed.

The pedagogical stance that I assumed grew out of my enduring sense of hope that there must be a way for individuals to rise above their obstacles, to sing their songs, to dance their dances, to live their lives in such a way that they resonate with hope and choice and freedom. My challenge, now, is to begin to articulate a thoughtful explanation and substantiation of my pedagogical beliefs, their sources, manifestations and implications.

In this thesis, I endeavour to show, in particular how my lived experience has influenced the role I have taken up as teacher; and more generally, how the presumptions that individuals carry into the territory they enter can inhibit or disable their ability to act meaningfully on the world(s) they inhabit.

There are two distinct, but necessarily inter-related domains from which my inquiry has emerged: the first is my classroom, and the second is my own home. Their inter-relationship is undeniable because I am a key participant in both landscapes. A constant tension plays throughout this thesis

between the stories that I tell of my classroom¹ and the stories that I tell of my home. It is just this tension that has led me to my questions about my pedagogical orientation and the influences that have contributed to its evolution. I have learned that for myself at least, there is an inextricable link between the two sites. The explication of this link becomes the essence of my work. I did not initially recognize the extent to which my home-life, specifically my subject-position of mother, influenced my pedagogy. My awareness of its central, undeniable influence emerged through the process of my research and my writing. Therefore, I begin my inquiry in my classroom because it was here that my questions first began to surface.

¹. The classroom that I refer to throughout this thesis is one of several that I have participated in, and it has some unusual characteristics that seem to require some explanation. It was an open-area classroom which essentially means that it was a very large physical space that I shared with one teaching-partner, Cindi Seddon, for three years. Together we enrolled from forty to fifty-five students, depending on the year, between the ages of five and nine. While we planned and taught collaboratively, we did each have our own separate "class-lists." That is, I was regarded as teacher of one-half of the students whose desks were on my side of the room, while Cindi was considered to be the teacher of the other half. While we both interacted with all of the children, and while the children generally had license to move freely within the entire open area, we each became particularly connected to the children who were formally assigned to our respective sides of the room. These were the children who we wrote report-cards for, and whose parents we interacted with in formal situations. I make several references to Cindi throughout this work, and so it seems important to explain the setting in order to clarify her role and her connection to my inquiry.

I. SITUATING THE PROBLEM

...and if we explore the stories of very young children, voiceless children living out their lives in early childhood institutions, what stories of schooling shall we tell of them? (Polakow, 1985:28).

There is no real escaping. There are only the possibilities of becoming clear, of making sense, and of choosing authentically, in the name of one's own vitality, one's own commitment to survive (Greene, 1973:209).

In this chapter, I reflect upon my early exploration of the landscape of my own classroom, and my realization that, despite having looked for the individuals among the group of children who were my students, I had not yet found them. Although this discovery occurred within the context of my classroom, that site itself is situated within the larger system of schooling.

The institution of the school, by its very nature, oppresses and obscures the individuality of the majority of its inhabitants - the children - and essentially renders them voiceless. It is predicated upon the technocratic orientation of western industrialized society, rather than on the needs and interests of individual children (Polakow, 1982). Indeed, both content and methodology arise out of the bureaucratized institutionalization of schooling that has succeeded remarkably in distancing learning from the daily realities of children's lives.

And today in the twentieth century, when the "science of childhood" has come of age, we have moved so far from the distant past of medieval miniature adulthood, have become so obsessed with the unqualified separateness of this period of life, that we have imposed on the social space of childhood an emasculating psychologism which has succeeded in alienating the life project of the child from the

child's existential reality (Polakow, 1982:8).

Children spend some five to six hours a day for ten months of the year in classrooms, a substantial portion of their young lives. Each of these students is an individual, with her/his own set of abilities, interests, emotions, idiosyncrasies. Each individual has her/his own life-story. But where do we find the individual child in this setting? Children have been relegated to positions of subordination as their daily experiences here are largely determined by teachers: how time is spent; what constitutes important versus trivial tasks; who will sit with whom and when; judgments about quality and quantity of learning as measured by participation and output - such considerations typify the work of teachers and profoundly influence the lives of the children who are their students.

The school, then, becomes the site where the externally-imposed life project of the child - apprenticeship for membership in the larger social, cultural and political order - displaces the ability of the child to participate in meaningful, personally intentional activity upon her/his surrounding world. In this landscape, individual activity is apprehended; individual faces are shadowed, their features obscured; individual voices are muted and silenced.

(Children are) formally schooled in the ways of the social system and emerge eighteen years later...having been deprived of their own history-making power, their ability to act upon the world in significant and meaningful ways (Polakow, 1982:8).

The child becomes the victim of universal forgetting and

consequent oppression. In order for children to seize their history-making power, it becomes essential to seek means of acknowledging and honouring the life stories of the participants in a classroom. For children to be able to act upon their world in significant and meaningful ways, they must be given a voice. No, not *given* a voice. To be *given* implies that someone else is still wielding the power. Children must be given the space to raise their own voices, and even then, not just to "raise a voice" but to raise a resounding, harmonious call - a call to action for themselves and of themselves.

However, young children, by virtue of their age and socially-contextualized immaturity are not able to create an enabling space for themselves within the existing oppressive domain of the school. They are inherently dependent on adults to create the possibilities of freedom for them. Specifically, located as they are by me in the institution of the school, they are dependent on teachers, and on teachers' recognition of their oppression.

But for teachers to recognize that the children are oppressed, must they first acknowledge their own oppression? Teachers are not storyless, decontextualized beings, and neither are they autonomous. They are bound to the "system" by virtue of their history as participants within it. While each teacher is an individual with her/his own life-story, their individuality is simultaneously subordinated to their professional responsibility to implement a curriculum which is more often designed to

expedite the agenda of the institution than it is designed to address and honour the needs, interests and abilities of the majority of its participants - the children. Greene (1973) writes:

The teacher is frequently addressed as if he [sic] had no life of his own, no body, and no inwardness...The numerous realities in which he exists as a living person are overlooked. His personal biography is overlooked; so are the many ways in which he expresses his private self in language, the horizons he perceives, the perspectives through which he looks out to the world...If the teacher agrees to submerge himself into the system, if he consents to being defined by others' views of what he is supposed to be, he gives up his freedom "to see, to understand and to signify" for himself (269-70).

Here arises a serious and difficult dilemma. The emancipation of children becomes dependent upon the choices that individual teachers make as to whether or not they will first, recognize their own oppression, and secondly, begin to intentionally act to free themselves. Children, then, are dependent on the teacher to take the initiative to explore her/his own domain; to locate the unique existence of self within it; and then to take action on their behalf, to seek ways to enable children to be individually present within the site that demands their presence.

A multitude of complex questions arises from this discussion about the mutual oppression of teachers and students within the institution of the school. For example, what constitutes oppression? What constitutes emancipation? Can one be told that one is oppressed? Or is it a process of discovery and awareness

that must be made by self? If I recognize the oppression of the children who are my students, how do I then act upon this recognition? What are my moral, ethical and pedagogical obligations to them? Who am I to determine that someone else is oppressed? Would such a determination about someone else's situation not be a perpetuation of the institutional subordination that I am decrying? And if I do determine to take action with the intent of enabling them to free themselves, then, quite simply, what is it that I should do? If I suggest, as I have done, that the recognition of my students' oppression is dependent upon my awareness of my own oppression, what must I reveal about the circumstances of my own subordination that will entitle me to make judgments about their situations, to act on their behalf?

More questions than these arise. However, I intend to show rather than tell. Now I "go to the things themselves" (Husserl, cited by Polakow, 1982:19), and so begin my exploration by locating myself within the territory that first enabled me to confront my own oppression and start to articulate the questions that I had previously sensed intuitively.

II. THE CONTEXT OF MY DISCOVERY

- ...because we believe that life is no story but a fact to be lived, a reality to be found as well as experienced and created by ourselves and together with other people (Langeveld, 1975:10).

Five years into my teaching career, I had just begun to

consider the possibilities that my own teaching practice might afford for individual children to empower themselves. My teaching partner and I had been working collaboratively in an open-area setting for two years. Our intent was to provide a child-centered curriculum - that is, a curriculum that honours and accommodates the diverse experiences and potentialities of our students. The development of a child-centered practice is, at best, a delicate unfolding; a tentative, hesitating negotiation of the collective needs, interests and abilities of the members of the classroom community. These are not readily apparent. The children know no more of us than we do of them when the school-year begins in September. There is, at the beginning, a period of time which is spent in coming to know - about each other as individuals, as well as the unique, ever-changing dynamics of our interactions together, in small and large groups and according to the particular activity at hand.

In an effort to convey some sense of what our child-centered practice looked like, I begin by describing our daily morning Reading Time. It is here that we began our endeavour to provide a forum that would enable children to pursue their individual needs and interests while simultaneously participating in the community of learners that we aspired to nurture.

III. THE SETTING

When Cindi and I begin each school-day morning, sitting in the middle of the open-area in our old brown well-worn armchairs,

we are surrounded by the children who are our students. Some are gathered on the rug in front of us. Some of them choose to sit on the arms of our chairs, and often some of their arms are around our necks, some of their bodies are nestled in our laps. We listen to the stories of what has happened since they were last here - a baseball game, a birthday party, a dog lost and then found.

"Guess what, Ms. Bodell and Ms. Seddon. I got invited to Sheila's birthday party." That is all she said, but she was so delighted. I don't think she's been invited to many parties this year [Fieldnote: April 2, 1992].²

We honour the requests of those who have something special to share.

Geoffrey came running up to us this morning. "Look, I found a caterpillar! Can I share it?" His eyes were shining as he held out his hand to show the fuzzy black and brown caterpillar on a green leaf. And this from a boy who ran home the first day he was so frightened of us! [Fieldnote: May 5, 1991].

We take attendance, and account for everyone's presence or absence. Often someone will offer an explanation as to why their friend is away - chicken pox or flu, occasionally a family holiday or a funeral. We express our sympathies or delights, as

². The anecdotes in this study that are cited as fieldnotes are taken from two particular sources: some are written entries that I made on the basis of personal observation following interactions or events that I regarded as significant because (a) my own emotional reaction to them incited me to record them and explore their content and ramifications more deeply, or (b) because the issues that they raised seemed to be particularly relevant to my inquiry. Others have been taken from the transcriptions of formal interviews that I conducted and tape-recorded with children who were my students. Again, I selected these particular excerpts because their content enabled me to ask specific questions about the nature and intent of my inquiry.

suits the occasion, together with the hope that whoever it is will be back with us again soon. And then they go off to Reading Time, choosing partners and books, and settling themselves onto cushions or chairs. Some gather around the little table in the playhouse, shutting the door so that they are privately enclosed in the world of the stories they have chosen; some go to the Listening Centre, donning headphones and opening books to read along with the cassette; and there are always a few who go around the corner to sit in the little nook that is lit up by the skylight and looks out onto the garden by the front door of the school: these children planted the garden themselves with a colourful array of spring bulbs which are now in full bloom - purple and golden crocus, blazing yellow daffodils, delicate butter-yellow narcissus, glorious red tulips and brilliant blue-purple hyacinths. (I would love to sit there myself in the morning and indulge in a favourite book.) Every morning there are some parents who join us, often bringing their pre-schoolers with them. It is not uncommon to see a mother or father or grandparent seated on the floor, holding a child on their lap, reading aloud to a group of children, or listening along with the others to a child who is reading aloud. When Reading Time ends, books are put away, the parents say good-bye and depart, and the children gather again in front of us, ready to continue with the day.

This is the normal course of events at the beginning of our school-days. To a visitor, and we have many, it would seem that

our classroom does, indeed, have the children at its heart. We are highly regarded among many of our colleagues, and a good number of parents, for the child-oriented nature of our practice. We do not take the praise lightly. It fortifies us against our critics - those who believe children should be grouped according to age, and sit silently in rows of desks, awaiting the dictate of the teacher - and motivates us to continue our exploration of how to best accommodate the needs, abilities and interests of the diverse group of children that we enrol together.

Now, in Spring, the children (for the most part) understand and honour the routines that we have established with them; they listen attentively when others are speaking; most are self-confident about voicing their questions, ideas and opinions; they seek democratic means of deciding whose book will be read first in their various circles. And between September and June, they generally demonstrate significant growth in all areas of development. Cazden writes: "...classrooms are, or should be, very special cultures -- a community of people who are changing, and whose change the environment should be specifically designed to support" (1988:198). Our classroom appears to honour these conditions: the environment appears to be harmonious, democratic and industrious, and supportive of change that seems to be represented by the ongoing growth and learning of the children and of us, their teachers.

But where are the children? Or perhaps, more importantly, *who* are these children? Is it not possible that another group of

forty or fifty children could be transplanted into this setting, and, given a week or two to learn the routines and expectations, our child-centered classroom would not be easily distinguished from the way it is with the present group of children? What influence, then, do the individual personalities and life-stories of this particular group of children have on the daily goings-on here? Polakow writes:

...(in) these classrooms... children are generally treated with care, are in a safe and protected environment, and are given some time to "play"; the teachers generally enjoy their students and are kind, well-meaning, and well-intentioned. It is precisely in these "best" classrooms that we can begin to decode the practices that are adultcentric, and structured to reproduce docility, conformity and educability (1989:83).

Was this the inevitable bitter reality that we must confront, despite our best intentions? our compassion and commitment to the needs and abilities of our students? our determination to foster a learning environment that is based upon principles of democracy, and mutual respect and kindness? Docility? Conformity? Educability? These are not characteristics that Cindi and I condone, nor wish to foster. In fact, we have spent countless hours together in discussions about possible ways that we could shape a teaching practice that would enable children to become assertive, self-directed, self-empowered as learners, and fully-voiced participants in our classroom community. We are two women who have frequently found ourselves in places of subjugation within the contexts of our own lives. We highly value these qualities that we are attempting to impart

in our students. We know from our own collective experience that they are not automatic givens.

I do not intend to lambaste our practice, and have no sense that the slate must be wiped clean and the work begin again. In fact, it occurs to me that my arrival at the question about the extent to which my students' lives and voices are represented in my practice is perhaps a natural next step in my own journey. If I had not endeavoured over the last few years to nurture a practice that honoured the individual in each of my students, I think that I would be unable to recognize now that perhaps I have not yet achieved that. What finally led me to this recognition?

THE STORY OF SONIA

It began with an encounter between myself and one of my students, Sonia. She was eight years old. It was a Friday afternoon. I had been away ill for a month, and had come back to visit the children for a little while before my return on the following Monday morning. They had welcomed me effusively, and then went off to work on their Father's Day cards.

Listen ...

Sonia waited a moment and then came and sat beside me in the old brown armchair. Squeezed right in beside me, as though she were my own child. Looking up at me, she said "I missed you so much, Ms. Bodell," and her huge, black, shining eyes filled with tears. And with that, she wrapped her arms around me and began to sob.

[I also began to cry, but I do not know if she knew and if she did, if she understood why.] The room grew very quiet, although it didn't seem to be an uncomfortable silence. There was more the sense that the sadness and pain deserved honouring. And there was a sense of curiosity and concern, evident in the eyes of the children who glanced over at us, perhaps wondering why ever-smiling, good-natured Sonia was so sad. I saw Jenny mouth to Peter "Were you mean to her?" He shook his head and cast his eyes down, the guilty look on his face of one who has often been the cause of tears. We sat together, Sonia and I, for a long time. As her tears eased, she began to tell me her story. It is the story of a little girl who has been asked to choose between her parents. It is the story of a young child being forced to confront a devastating, unmendable tear in the fabric of her life. She would not make her father a Father's Day card because she was angry at him - angry at him for leaving, angry because he was angry at her that she would not leave the rest of her family to be with him, to move to another city, to leave her friends and school and mother and siblings and dog and home. And even though this had all begun weeks ago, just after I went off sick, she had not told this story to the other teachers. She had waited a whole month to

tell it to me. (Fieldnote: June 12, 1992).³

IV. THE INSIGHTS AFFORDED BY SONIA'S STORY

Sonia's story yielded at least three insights, perceived by me through her actions in a particular and significant order. They are these: Sonia saw me; I saw Sonia; and I saw myself. [Perhaps Sonia also saw herself. I do not know and will not presume to speak for her.]

Sonia, I think it is safe to say, did not intentionally give these insights to me. She was so young! Although I have often referred to her as "a wise old woman" to my friends - for I have observed the perceptive and sagacious ways she interacts with others. She summons up images of the aging dowager who has been long enough in this world to understand "just how it is that things work between people" - how could she really possibly

³. What I did not tell when I first wrote this piece two years ago was why I had been away for a month. My two children have lived primarily with their father for the past eight years. Two years ago, he remarried and consequently, another woman began to live with my children. I became permanently relegated to the status of part-time mother. I deal with this event and its influence on my subject-position as teacher in Chapters Two and Three. For now, it seems significant to explain that I was absent from my classroom for a month because I needed at least this amount of time to begin to adjust to my new role (of course, it has taken much longer!). Secondly, it is probably less than coincidental that the teacher-student interaction - that is, the interaction between Sonia and me - that so profoundly influenced the course of my inquiry involved a similar, equally critical shift in relationship - in this case, the change in Sonia's relationship with her father. Knowing myself as I do, I would have been sympathetic regardless of my own personal circumstances at the time. But, given my own situation, I was much more than sympathetic. I knew her bereavement, anguish and anger intimately because they were my own.

understand at the age of eight years the extent to which she influenced the course of my pedagogical inquiry, never mind my own individual stance in my world? I believe she was seeking me out as one who had been a constant presence within the context of that particular school-year, someone who knew some of the history that preceded this difficult point in her life, and who she felt she could trust because of the nature of the history that we had shared together.

If this interaction had not occurred, I would have eventually come to the understandings that they revealed in a different way within another context. Other situations have taken place since then that have reinforced the perceptions that I acquired through this interaction. But it did occur, and dramatically influenced the stance I assume as teacher. I will explain the significance of each of these insights in the same order that I discerned them.

1. "SONIA SAW ME"

Where the look of parenting surpasses touch, totalizing it without obliterating it or the symbiosis it expresses, the look of pedagogy as it has evolved in schools repudiates touch. The teacher is untouchable, invulnerable. The gradual and orderly surrender of one's body is the project of the elementary school ...the look that constitutes identity in school is organized to undermine dialogue (Grumet, 1988:111-12).

- Most teachers have stories such as this to tell of heart-breaking moments in our students' lives. Often these moments are points at which someone who has been institutionally relegated to

our "care" reaches beyond the boundaries of our institutional roles and seeks a "real life" connection with us. Sonia had carried her sorrow with her for an entire month, suppressing it (at least at school) until I returned so that she could tell me about it, showing me that in her eyes, I seemed to be an individual who was trustworthy, safe, comforting, reliable. I embodied security.

Although a substitute teacher had been working in my place for a month (one that Sonia had some history with because this person had frequently substituted for one or the other of us throughout the year), and although Cindi had been constantly present during my absence, Sonia waited for me. If it was just a "teacher" that she needed, here were two kind, committed, empathetic women who, I can confidently say by virtue of knowing them both so well and having spent so many hours observing both of them interact with the children who are their students, would have taken the time to listen to and respond to her story. Moreover, when the three of us discussed the incident later, they'd been given no hint of her distress. It seems, then, that it was not just a teacher that she sought out: it was Ms. Bodell in person, or perhaps more aptly put, the person who is sometimes called Ms. Bodell.

[The question could be asked, and justifiably: "What if I had not returned?" Perhaps teachers have a moral obligation not to engage on a personal level with the children who are their students simply because they will not always be present? How can

we in any conscience negotiate relationships that are premised on security and reliability when in fact they are potentially transient? But one could "what if..." forever. I did return, and what I am now exploring are the possibilities for human interaction that my return afforded.]

There are two different vantage points that I can assume in considering Sonia's regard of me. The first is that this interaction might have had little to do with the fact that I was the teacher and Sonia was the student, although it was certainly this institutionally-prescribed relationship that had brought us together and enabled us to negotiate a relationship as individuals who cared about each other. Thus, the first significant aspect, or insight, of this interaction could be that Sonia saw me as an individual, not as an agent of the institution.

The other vantage point that I can take position at is that I was most clearly the teacher and that it was Sonia's child-perception of the omnipotent status of teachers that enabled her to seek refuge in my arms. That is, if she regarded me as the teacher who is all-knowing and infallible, then it could also make sense that she would turn to me for comfort in the midst of her difficult circumstances.

I recognize that Sonia saw me before I saw Sonia by the very fact that she sought me out before I noticed her distress. As soon as the excitement of my arrival had been quelled a bit by Cindi - who, having sensed that I was feeling a bit overwhelmed

by their enthusiastic reception of me, had sent them all to their desks to work on their Father's Day cards - Sonia approached me. No, she didn't approach me. She climbed right onto my lap, settled there, and wrapped her arms around my neck. I don't think it even occurred to her that I might resist her. [Neither did it occur to me to resist her. Her entry into my personal space was as natural an embrace as any I've experienced.]

I have often wondered since then if Sonia saw or sensed my own distress, and if she did, then did she approach me because of some subliminal sense she might have had that I could understand and empathize with her sadness because I was feeling the same way?

*If the road be long,
And travellers none
 A man talks to himself.
If showers of sorrows
Fall down like arrows
The lone wayfarer
 May talk by himself.
So an old woman
On lone country roads,
Laughing all the time,
 May babble to herself
To keep the tears away.
Woman, you are sad!
'Tis the same with me.*

R.E.G. Armattoo, 1967:9

2. "I SAW SONIA"

It was Sonia seeing me that invited me to see her. It had not occurred to me to even look for her. When I entered that classroom, I was looking out only for myself, trying to determine if I was ready to return to "work." Her act of reaching out to

me gave me something to respond to, something to measure my own emotional resources by. But she accomplished something else besides.

When I looked down into Sonia's face, I saw that I was not the only person in that room who had some grief to contend with. All year she had been offering hints of what was happening at home. Now she was asking me to look directly at her.

Forbidden to look at each other, and now forbidden to look at the teacher, children become adept at surreptitious glances and clever about protecting themselves from being seen when they look (Grumet, 1988:114).

Sonia did not seem to feel forbidden to look at me, nor did she seem to be trying to protect herself from being seen. I have already suggested that Sonia saw me as an individual, not as a teacher. But I was her teacher, and this reality is only emphasized by the fact that our interaction occurred within a classroom, with fifty-plus other students and teachers watching. I think that Grumet's conceptualization of the pedagogical look captures the essence of the dilemma that emerged within me when I encountered Polakow's charges of docility, conformity and educability (1989:83). I am trying to challenge the apparent inevitability of "loss" of self within the domain of the institution, and I am endeavouring to use this narrative to explicate that perhaps the surrender of self need not be inevitable. One of my pedagogical motives has been to seek ways to transcend the rigid, professional limitation on relationship that the institution of the school seems to impose (Polakow,

1982; Grumet, 1988). The personal engagement between Sonia and me required, and was granted, mutual consent from both of us. Does this reality not offer the hope that we might be able to collectively overcome the fixed visual rigidity that such institutional blinders impose, that there may be a way to surpass the apparent survival mechanism of surreptitious glances, to interact with each other openly, humanly and honestly?

I looked at the person who was sitting in my lap, and I saw much more than just a little girl who was being forced to confront one of the most difficult crossroads she would ever arrive at in her life. I saw Sonia. I saw her large shining black eyes well up with tears, the soft smooth skin of her cheeks; I felt her arms around my neck. She seemed to be completely, fully present, and the magnitude of her presence left me awe-struck at the power of my role as teacher. What influence I hold over these young lives! This interaction seemed to me to transcend the teacher-student relationship, but I also remember feeling completely powerless to help her beyond offering comfort and sympathy within that moment. At the time, within the context of my own circumstances, I did not know what else to do. I wondered later, if this absence of any sense of direction on my part should have indicated to me that I was not ready to return. On the other hand, perhaps it is arrogant of me to presume that I should have taken any other action on her behalf, that I should have known what else she needed, if anything. Perhaps it was enough for Sonia that I returned her embrace, stroked her cheek

and listened to her story.

The second significant insight afforded by this interaction is that, perhaps for the first time, I saw the child who is called Sonia, not as the teacher looking at the student, but as me, the person who is sometimes called Ms. Bodell, looking beyond the arms and cheeks and shining black eyes, and into the depths of her person that she seemed to have chosen to open up for me to see.

3. "I SAW MYSELF"

This is where my world began: a world which formed me and continues to do so; a world which gave me my own life-work to do because it was here that I learned the sight of my own eyes (Margaret Laurence, 1978:Video).

I did not initiate the interaction with Sonia, but neither did I dissuade her when she engaged with me. I welcomed Sonia's embrace. I welcomed her tears. She gave me permission to cry. Did she think that I was weeping for her? Did she know that I was weeping for myself? At the time, I believed that no one in that room, except Cindi and me - the two teachers - could have known that. No one else knew why I had been absent for a month, not even the substitute teacher. Sonia risked her storytelling but I did not risk mine. Perhaps, then, I embody Grumet's "pedagogical look"? (1988:111-12). I was far more concerned about protecting myself from being seen than Sonia seemed to be about hiding herself. I had been away for a month because of the indominatable circumstances of my own life. I was in no mood at

all to try to deal with the world. I sought solitude, isolation, and protection by distance. I sought escape. So what should happen within moments of my return? A child, admittedly one who I held very dear, climbed up onto my lap and wrapped her arms around my neck and began to weep. It was very difficult for me to discern at the time who she was weeping for. At first, I thought that Sonia, the "wise old soul" was weeping for me. My recognition of the way she seemed to regard me gave me pause to look beyond her sight, to see myself reflected in her eyes, and to consider the sight of myself that my own eyes beheld.

Simply, yet profoundly, Sonia showed me what I had known all along at some deeper level, but had not been confronting: I was not just a dispensable, replaceable, anonymous "teacher." Who and what I was, person and teacher, were inextricably linked together. Sonia's perception of me, the relationship that we negotiated, the experience that we shared together revealed this reality. As much as I had been trying to distance myself from human interaction, just the fact of seeking isolation bespeaks this certainty. If my "job" did not require "me" to be present, I would not have had to make myself absent for a month. To disregard the individual who happens also to be the teacher, to acknowledge only the technician, is to render impossible any inter-"personal" relationship, any potential for caring, humanistic interaction between the individuals who, by the circumstances of their institutional roles necessarily assume the subject-positions of teacher and student.

I saw myself in Sonia's eyes, through Sonia's eyes. What is the significance of this third vision, and how am I obligated to act on this sight of myself, reflected as I was in the eyes of a child?

What "learning the sight of my own eyes" meant was that I finally acknowledged my previously unarticulated sense that my lived experience includes who I am in the classroom. And so, too, I began to understand more fully that children's lived experiences includes who they are outside of the classroom.

Neglecting the context from which a life is narrated invites the risk of misunderstanding and misinterpretation. Acknowledging the centrality and complexity of context reveals the range of experiences and expectations within which...(individuals) live, and provides a vital perspective from which to interpret...(individuals') ways of navigating the weave of relationships and structures which constitute their worlds (Personal Narratives Group, 1989:19).

Sonia, by telling me her story, gave me the opportunity to participate in the context of her life, and offered me a powerful vision of myself as a purveyor of possibility in relationship. What then, was my obligation to Sonia and to the other children who were/are my students? Having heard her story ... no, more than that ... having held her in my arms as I listened to her tell her story, responding in ways that I hoped would let her know that I was hearing her: was it sufficient to be compassionate and empathetic? What if I had refused her? Clearly this was a choice I had. It is not one that I made when offered the possibility of this particular interaction, but I have probably, certainly done so at other times, unwittingly or

not. What if I had chosen to dissuade Sonia? What if I had considered her story to be trivial and inconsequential? I could have scurried her out of my lap in order to carry on with some other interaction or activity that I regarded as more important. It was the reality of her story striking so close to my own that held me there with her. I do have a considerable amount of self-respect, and I know that I would do my best to make the time for her, regardless. But I do think that our interaction was extended and intensified by the similarity and proximity of her lived experience to mine. And surely, on the basis of her initiation and disclosure, I had previously engaged with her - intentionally or not - in such a way that she felt comfortable risking her storytelling with me. But am I always obligated to respond in a caring way - whatever that might mean within the context of the relationship that is being negotiated between the child and me - regardless of whether or not I genuinely feel empathy or compassion? Where is the boundary between treating an individual with respect, and misconstruing the sincerity of concern, if there is one?

Perhaps by the very act of becoming a teacher, I have obligated myself to reciprocal engagement and action. On the other hand, graduating with a degree that entitles one to be a teacher is not even remotely comparable to the process of living in close proximity to a group of children on a daily basis for ten months of the year. It is more likely my decision and commitment to continuing this process of engagement that behooves

me to reflect upon the obligation that I have made; to consider the interplay and convergence of the three insights that I have discerned and delineated ; and to determine, or at least explore, how I might now act upon the revelations and understandings that they have afforded.

V. THE RISKS OF WRITING OTHERS' STORIES

In a sense, all narrative is concerned with change: there is something in the impulse to narrative that is related to the impulse to liberation. Narrative re-collects, remembers, repeats...in order for there to be an escape from repetition, in order for there to be change or progress (Greene, G., 1991:291).

Writing the stories of another's lived experience is a precarious business. It seems to me that there is great potential for unwarranted, even unethical intervention. Always there is the risk that the individual will not be present in my writing, conscientious as I might be about representing Sonia's lived experience in such a way as to avoid violating her reality (Lather, 1991:67). On the other hand, to simply engage in writing about this interaction seems a pathetically inadequate response to what is, without doubt, a most tragic occurrence in Sonia's life.

This is not an incidental comment. For me, it lies at the heart and soul of my practice, and is perhaps the sole reason that I had been eschewing the reality that the incident with Sonia forced me to confront. Beyond the "good" ethnographer's stance (Agar, 1980) and the acknowledgement of reflexivity, there

sometimes seems so little to be done.

Perhaps what is unique about most primary (and maybe intermediate) teachers who explore their own classrooms for the purposes of research, is that we are not just participants in the landscape we research. We become intimately connected to our students. We spend more time with many of our students than do their parents. It must be acknowledged that we necessarily become inhabitants of their life-worlds simply by the extensiveness of our institutionally-prescribed relationship. We spend too much time with them to be considered inconsequential or insignificant.

The potential that exists for us to exert significant influence over the lives of our young students must not be ignored. There is a tremendous inherent power and privilege in being a teacher of primary students. One has twenty-plus young children holding you in regard as an authority, a caretaker, a helper, a knower, a leader. One knows that these many roles are blindly accepted by most children as natural and unquestionable: acknowledgement of this potential power and privilege of the primary teacher is significant and important because within the context of our society, children have been divested of the resources required for them to act for themselves.

To be silenced...is this not the ultimate subjugation? To be rendered voiceless within the landscape that is the context of one's very existence...is this not to disappear? As I become dialectically engaged in the narratives of my students, as

listener and especially as writer, am I not then obligated to at least try to re-present their narratives within the context of their lived experience so that their voices, which individually resonate with who they are in place and time, are heard within the context of the stories that I write about them?

Agar (1980) cautions me against the potential arrogance of the ethnographic stance. His warning is justified and I must heed it: I cannot speak for them. As I become the writer of their stories, I must be constantly seeking to locate them within the context of their lived experience, much of which I share with them.

You never want to say that it's good or bad. That's got nothing to do with it...Do we complain of a friend's writing in a strongly-felt letter? The attention is on the content...From the teacher's end it boils down to....whether or not she [sic] has the fit or the wisdom to listen to another; the ability to draw out and preserve that other's line of thought (Ashton-Warner, 1963:57).

My decision to write about Sonia's story - and later, others' - escalates the importance and urgency of my call to action, and intensifies my agenda for narrative as praxis.

But can narratives be construed as praxis? If so, how? If I write stories about the lives of the children who are my students, whose stories am I relating? Theirs? or my perception of their stories which are, in turn, their perceptions of their lives? And if I construe the narratives that I write about their lives to be praxis, how does this writing enable or afford my stated agenda for emancipatory pedagogical practice?

For it is in the stories of everyday lives, the drama,

the meanings, the metaphors others live by, that the human science researcher must practice his or her craft of telling. But whose stories should we tell? And when the telling is done, and the voices of the voiceless are heard, does storytelling not invoke a call to action? (Polakow, 1985:826).

Praxis implies a need for change, for action, for emancipation. "The sight of my own eyes ... a call to action ... whether or not I have the fit or the wisdom to listen to another" -- how do I, as empathetic and caring person; as dedicated and committed teacher - how do I make the transition from practice to praxis? And beyond the sight of my own eyes, what can I not see because of the eyes that I have? Is it not possible that to decontextualize self, to dismiss the historical, social and cultural dimensions of one's experience, is to operate robotically, as though in a vacuum, unseeing, unfeeling, unthinking. If I do purport to pursue praxis, must I not caution myself always against the risks inherent in presupposing what meaning or understanding a child may take from her/his experience? When I impose my experience and corresponding expectations on the unfolding of the story, do I not then cease to be the storyteller and become the oppressor? Do I not sabotage the potential for the dialectic to emerge by imposing my values on their stories? Finally, if I take praxis to mean the ongoing action and reflection upon the world in order to transform it (Lather, 1991:13), surely that requires some acknowledgement of who I am in place and time.

In every story there exists a dialectic between teller and listener and at some moment the horizons of telling and listening fuse--"the story sinks itself into the

life of the storyteller" (Benjamin, 1969) and as our lived worlds merge, engagement begets reciprocity and participation in the world of the other and evokes for us the call to act (Polakow, 1985:829).

VI. MY OWN NARRATIVES BECOME MY PRAXIS

To critically intervene in reality involves seeing the interconnectedness of the personal and social, of class and culture, of history and present. The child is not a deculturated, isolated monad, existing in ahistorical relationships to his [sic] era, but rather, lives in culture, in language, and makes history together with other human beings (Polakow, 1982:32).

Neither am I, as individual who is primary teacher, a deculturated, isolated monad. I live out a substantial part of my life in the "culture" of my classroom, in language with my students, in making history together with other human beings, again my students.

But I also live out a substantial part of my life away from my classroom, in language with others, in making history together with other human beings who are not my students. Throughout this chapter, I have quoted from the writings of Valerie Polakow (1982,1985,1986,1989) because they have been highly relevant to the questions that I pursue, and in many cases her astute articulation of her ideas has so succinctly summed up the intuitive sense that I have had about my practice and the questions that I've been asking that I have almost felt she has been situated in my head; seated behind my eyes, observing what I see; speaking my very thoughts for me before I can utter them myself. But while she has done extensive fieldwork in early-

childhood institutions, she has done so from the vantage point of observer: she is not an active participant in a community that is mainly comprised of young children; she is not, on a daily basis, negotiating a shared reality with them. While I have been attempting to negotiate a shared reality within a community that is comprised of the children who become my students, I simultaneously acknowledge that this is not the sole essence of my existence. I counter the possibility suggested by Greene:

If the teacher agrees to submerge himself [sic] into the system, if he consents to being defined by others' views of what he is supposed to be, he gives up his freedom to see, to understand, and to signify for himself (1973:270).

Instead, I will most determinedly pursue the other course of action that she poses as a possibility:

If, on the other hand, he [sic] is willing to take the view of the homecomer and create a new perspective on what he has habitually considered real, his teaching may become the project of a person vitally open to his students and the world. Then...he will be continuously engaged in interpreting a reality forever new; he will feel more alive than he ever has before (Greene, 1973:270).

In the two subsequent chapters, I am going to write stories from my vantage points as teacher and as mother in an effort to show how my own lived experience has revealed to me the fundamental centrality of self to storytelling - or narrative - that purports to be oriented towards praxis and pedagogical emancipation. It seems to me that the act of revealing my own circumstances both legitimizes and demands my inquiry and, indeed, has the potential to offset any risk of arrogance on my part to presume to know what life is like for other individuals,

and what course of action they must take to change or alter the oppressive conditions of their own circumstances (Greene, 1988; Alcoff, 1991; Brookes; 1992). This is how I will begin to take up my own call to action.

Chapter Two

ENTERING THE LANDSCAPE

Fundamentally, perhaps, I am conscious of the tragic dimension in every human life. Tragedy, however, discloses and challenges; often it provides images of men and women on the verge. We may have reached a moment in our history when teaching and learning, if they are to happen meaningfully, must happen on the verge. Confronting a void, confronting nothingness, we may be able to empower the young to create and re-create a common world--and in cherishing it, in renewing it, discover what it means to be free (Greene, 1988:23).

What is the tragic dimension of my own lived experience, at least as I perceive it? What is it that I feel compelled to both disclose and challenge? What is the void that I have confronted, that has initiated and perpetuated my journey towards enabling young children to discover what it is to be free, if this is ever possible? What must I write about my own lived experience in order to reveal that I have a genuine sense of how it is to be oppressed by an institution(s), and how one can act to rise above and go beyond the apparent obstacles that have been set in her/his way?

My objective in this second chapter is to reveal some of the circumstances through which I began to understand my own oppression, and which ultimately led to the beginning of my own

freedom and my own ability to discern the possibilities for emancipatory pedagogy in more concrete terms.

I. BEGINNING TO KNOW

In her preface to Bitter Milk, Madeleine Grumet writes:

In this text I am attempting to understand what teaching means to women. Women constitute the majority of all public school personnel; nevertheless, our experience of this work is hidden...It is hidden from our students, our colleagues, even from ourselves. Its absence is not a mere oversight. Nor is it that we have been so busy doing it that we haven't taken the time to think about it. There is something about the task itself, the way it wedges itself into our lives, the way we place it somewhere between our work and our labour, our friendships and our families, our ambition and our self-abnegation, that has prohibited our speaking of it. Sometimes it seems to me that it is everything that could possibly matter to us (1988:xi).

It is not difficult for me to intuitively and privately understand how much teaching has come to matter to me. I have a strong instinctive sense of how three of my differentiated subject positions - woman, mother and teacher - merge together to influence the stance I assume as pedagogue. Beyond intuition and intellect, I need only to reflect back on the intensity of the seven years of my teaching career, and my constant engagement in personal and professional reflection and development, in order to characterize myself as one individual embodiment of Grumet's assertion. I know for myself what I have invested and risked, what I have gained and lost, and I constantly engage in private scrutiny of my own growth and short-comings. Over the years, I have amassed a rich store of memories of joyful and productive moments that have nurtured and nourished me, a store that continues to grow, and whose singular moments never cease to

delight and amaze me. They motivate me, and sanction and validate the ever-unfolding journey I chart with my students and with my own children.

There have also been times when I have been most disheartened and discouraged, when frustration or outrage have incited me to seek ways to opt out of teaching and become "something else". But so far I have always been able to reach the point where I could objectify my reaction; to recognize that my emotional response to some perceived or real injustice that seemed to inhibit or limit what I believed to be my pedagogical imperative was a natural and human one.

Certainly, I have not reached these points independently. Friends and colleagues have gathered around me at these times, often just to listen to my rantings, or to offer encouragement and advice, sometimes to remind me why it is that I do this work that engages my passion to such an intense degree. Independent of them, I have sought other sources of support, words of women who, like me, are teachers and have gathered the strength and courage to overcome and rise above obstacles that have appeared in their way. I am thinking particularly now of Sylvia Ashton-Warner who devoted so many years of her life to teaching Maori children in New Zealand. In Teacher (1963), as she approaches the end of her career and begins to face the realization that her life-work will not be continued by the young teachers who were taking over from her, she writes:

I'm not one of those souls like drifting rain-wraiths
out of touch with the essence of life, looking backward

through thick tears at some moment departed and weeping that life is not worthwhile. I use those moments. At each of those times I saw the meaning of life and knew that I saw it. True, I knew that inevitably there would be many deep troughs to follow. But everytime I reached those heights I said, "All my life before and my life after is justified by the wonder of this moment." Many of those moments I have forgotten now but I haven't forgotten what I said. And I trust myself. What ever comes my way now, I know already that it has been worth being alive. Even in troughs like this (1963:200).

I can say these things for myself as well. I know for myself how completely and thoroughly I am a teacher. Sometimes I wonder if my teaching has wedged itself into my life, or if my life has wedged itself into my teaching. True, I too have had many dark moments, have fallen into some very deep troughs. But each time, so far, I have found a way to rise out of them, spurred on by the words of women like Ashton-Warner, and by my relentless insistence that there is a way for the individual to rise above the institution, to find courage in the face of adversity, to move forward over the top of seemingly insurmountable obstacles.

But this is private, personally-situated knowledge. My challenge is to bring out from hiding the process of my coming to know how my lived experience as woman and mother has influenced the stance I assume as teacher.

My purpose for setting what has become an earnest and difficult task is hardly arbitrary or incidental. Rather, it is deeply rooted in a singular pedagogical objective that has driven my teaching practice since the beginning of my career: to seek ways to connect the curriculum to the daily realities of student's lives. As I showed in Chapter One, by relating Sonia's

story, my inquiry begins in the classroom, in the landscape that I share with the children who are my students. In this setting, I begin to voice my questions and examine the interplay between the different arenas of my life and how their interconnections have led me to my pursuit of emancipatory pedagogy. It is here that I will begin the arduous but essential task of showing how my three specified subject positions - woman, mother and teacher - necessarily interact to influence who and what and how I become as teacher.

I am going to relate the story about what transpired on a day that I took my son to school with me. I have chosen to write about this incident because it was through this particular story that I began to recognize the extent to which an individual - specifically myself and my son - can be oppressed by an institution. In this case, the institutions of the school (as represented by senior-level administration and possibly a parent(s) of one of my students) and the local media responded to my act of bringing my son to my workplace in ways that interfered with my right to be mother and teacher simultaneously, and his right to be a child and a son simultaneously.

It may seem a negative orientation on my part to begin my questioning about how to honour and accommodate the lived experiences of my students within our shared landscape of the classroom by relating an episode which seemed to compromise my right to be mother and teacher simultaneously, never mind the potential consequences for my child and for my students. It may

also seem that this story is irrelevant because my relationship with my students is not central to its events. However, its aftermath most certainly influenced the nature of my interactions with some of them at least and, if only for this reason, it becomes relevant to my inquiry.

Polakow writes: "It is parenthood and childhood that encompass the first dialectic of praxis upon the world. It is in that praxis that the seeds of social transformation will be sown" (1982:16). For me, one of the most politically inhibiting consequences of this episode was its potential to interfere with the praxis that I purport to pursue by rendering me voiceless as a mother and a teacher within the very institution - the school - that houses and enables my work. Ironically, perhaps, when the emotional reaction had quelled and I was able to orient myself intellectually to the ramifications and implications of the events that took place, it was just this institutional denial of me as mother and teacher simultaneously that compelled and incited me to continue my work towards emancipatory pedagogical practice with an even more heightened sense of urgency, commitment and passion.

I would like to explain that I have chosen to relate this story almost as I originally wrote it. Minimal changes were made, according to the suggestions of a friend who read the story with no prior knowledge of the episode, that seemed to be necessary to clarify the order of events as they occurred, and to explain some terms that I use whose meanings are unique to my

practice. As I re-read it, I realize that I could have raised a number of other questions and issues. However, I have chosen to honour the story as I first wrote it because I think that these initial issues, while not the only ones, are the ones that are closest to me. That is, these are the points at which I felt most seriously compromised and violated, and were the targets of my initial emotional reaction. After the writing, I will discuss these issues and raise a number of others that, in retrospect, seem to me to be significant within the context of my pedagogical inquiry.

THE DAY I TOOK MATTHEW TO SCHOOL WITH ME

Last Wednesday, I took my son Matthew to school with me for the day. I enjoy having him there with me from time to time. It allows me to share my professional life with him, and it humanizes my role as a teacher by letting my students see that I am also a mother. It is not the first time that I have brought him, and being close to the age of my students, he has made friends among them. He has told me that he likes coming with me. Last Wednesday was a Professional-Development Day for the teachers at his school, and as such it seemed a good opportunity to take him to school with me because he would not have to miss an instructional day at his own school.

In the morning, with several parents there awaiting the beginning of our daily Reading Time, I introduced Matthew to everyone. I explained that he was able to visit because it was a

Pro-D day at his school, and encouraged everyone to make him feel welcome, and "show him the ropes" as it were. I have found that my students tend to greet such requests of mine with a tremendous amount of enthusiasm. As usual, he was almost mobbed by students inviting him to read with them, and share their desks for the day. In fact, I had very little direct interaction with him. He scurried out at recess with a group of children, ate lunch with the children whose group of desks he was sitting at, and ran out again at the 12:15 bell to play soccer for the duration of the lunch-hour. My own parental pleasure seemed to lie in my subconscious awareness of his presence. The only time that he approached me directly during the day was to ask for the notebook that he had used the last time that he was here, which I had in my desk drawer, so that he could participate in writing and math activities alongside the children he was working with.

At the end of the day, some of my students even complained that he had not been shared around fairly - that some children had not been able to spend as much time with him as others had! Unaware of what was about to happen, I promised that he would be back again, and perhaps other children would be able to spend more time with him on a subsequent visit. As the teacher, I am expected to make everything fair, and I always try to do this. But as I have already said, Matthew has made friends with some of my students, and I knew that these were the children he wanted to spend his time with. Both the parent and the teacher in me prevented me from interfering with the very reasonable choices

that he was making for himself! After school, Matthew and I went home and talked about the day we had spent together as mother/teacher and son/student. We concurred that it had been a positive experience for both of us and when I asked him if he would like to come to school with me again, his response was a resounding "Yes!" We did not know, then, that it would never happen again.

On Thursday morning, my principal came down to my classroom looking a bit strained but still smiling, as he always does. Someone - reportedly a parent of one of my students, although this has never been substantiated - had phoned our local newspaper and complained that I was abusing my power as teacher by having my child come to school with me when it was a Professional Development day at his school!⁴ My first reaction was incredulity, and then anger, that one of my parents - who I always try to welcome into my classroom, beginning with the morning Reading Time - had felt so put upon by Matthew's presence that they felt a need to phone the local newspaper to register

⁴. It is probably important to point out that not only was my son in attendance for the day, but also the son of my principal was in attendance in my classroom on the same day for the same reasons. As it happened, both boys attended the same school in that school-year. They had both been in my classroom during the previous school-year, but they had attended different schools therefore their respective Professional Development Days did not coincide. Furthermore, their presence, and the reason for it, had been announced by Cindi or me in much the same terms that it had been announced on this particular day. It is possible that the allegation of misuse of privilege was directed as much, or more, toward my principal than towards me. However, this possibility did not lessen the sense of violation that I felt, nor lessen my incitement to respond to the allegations of abuse of privilege that were levelled against me.

their complaint! Certainly I had been given no sense by anyone who was present within my classroom over the course of the day that they were upset or concerned about the propriety of his being there.

I approached a few of my colleagues with the story, teachers who didn't have children of their own. I wanted to get a sense of other people's reactions. Was I naive and deluded to think that it was appropriate for me to bring Matthew to school with me? They were as outraged and disbelieving as I. I also spoke to the parents of two of my students after school, women who were very supportive of my program, women who I knew would address me in person if they were concerned about any aspect of my practice (I know this because they have done so in the past). They were upset and sympathetic. Donna's first comment was "Oh, someone's getting dirty!" They are both aware that some of my parents are less than content with me this year! Donna also commented on how disappointed I must be. She said "This morning when you introduced Matthew, I thought "How nice for Joyce that she can bring her son to school with her. As a working parent, you don't have the opportunities we do to be a part of your child's school. I just thought how nice it was for you." But they did not have any sense of who it might have been who had registered the complaint.

On Friday, I was given a copy of the memo that was sent around to all of the schools by senior-level administration, stating that they were unaware this practice ever occurred, and

that it must not occur again. I found myself being implicated as an apparent abuser of my privileges as teacher, not needing to find appropriate care for my son as other parents must do on Professional Development days by simply bringing him to school with me. No one ever asked me if this was my motive. It most certainly was not. I had a number of alternatives available to me. His father was willing to take the day off to look after him, and my own parents would have happily taken him for the day. Further, my own contract provides me with a number of discretionary days to look after my children when other sources of childcare are not available.

So, I was rendered voiceless as mother and teacher, and the potential to be both simultaneously was stripped from me. But, the ultimate disappointment for me is that I can no longer invite Matthew to school with me. I cannot again have him stay overnight, and pack our lunches together, and drive together to my school, and spend the day together in my classroom, as mother and son while I am teacher with my students. Someone decided that this is an inappropriate practice. [Fieldnote: February 1993].

II. ISSUES THAT ARISE FROM THIS STORY

A number of issues arise from this story, some of which I have already raised within the story itself. I will begin by exploring my own stance as a part-time mother, and show how this influenced both my response to the episode, and the direction of

my own research. I will also examine the implications for myself as mother and teacher; the position that senior-level administration took; the apparent reasons and motivations for the parent(s) to have dealt with the issue in the apparent way that was chosen; and the consequences for my students and for my own son. In conclusion, I will explain how this episode and its related issues extend and enhance the questions I have been raising within the context of my own inquiry.

1. My Stance as Part-Time Mother Influences My Research

First, and most important to me, this experience clearly denied me the right to be mother and teacher simultaneously. This was both an awkward and painful position for me to find myself in, for a reason that I explained in Chapter One (footnote 3:16) and hinted at when I wrote "I cannot again have him [Matthew] stay overnight with me, and pack our lunches together" (this chapter:44).

I am not a mother who lives full-time with her children. Or perhaps I should say, I am a mother who does not live full-time with her children. And even this is not quite accurate. Many mothers send their children off to their fathers for occasional evenings and alternate weekends. But, in my case, my children are sent to me by their father for occasional evenings and alternate weekends. So, perhaps to put it most accurately, I am, at least in the physical sense of residing together, a part-time mother. Throughout this thesis, when I refer to myself as a

part-time mother, this is what I will mean. Of course, I am always a mother, in the emotional and cognitive sense. But my right to have ongoing access to my children has been institutionally prescribed and delimited.

When I was a young mother - and I mean that I was young, only twenty-one years old when I had my first baby, and so were my children young when we ceased living together in constant physical proximity to each other, just three and seven years old - it was beyond my comprehension that I would not be with them on a full-time basis for the duration of their youth, until they were ready themselves to leave my home.

And yet here I am, and have been for many years, eight in fact. My sons are now eleven and fifteen, and I am thirty-seven. This part-time motherhood has become the context of my life. It defines who I am, and what I can do. It influences every aspect of my being. It is the reason that I have been a teacher for seven years, rather than only for one or two. There was no longer a reason for me to take my undergraduate courses just one or two at a time because my duties as mother prevented me from engaging in full-time studies. I became a full-time student when I became a part-time mother. If I was a full-time mother, I would not even be engaged in this research. Perhaps I would have begun graduate work by now, considering the ages of my sons, or at least be contemplating the possibility. But I would not be at the stage of writing a thesis. I would not have had the time. I would have had too many other things to do on a day-to-day basis

with and for my children to even consider devoting the hours and days and weekends that I do to this research, over and above the demands of my teaching job.

But when my children were taken away, and all the empty hours of late afternoons, evenings and weekends lay before me that had been previously taken up with all the pleasures and drudgery of parenting, I needed to find something to do with myself. I needed something meaningful to do that would seem to have some credibility and respectfulness to it, something that would be regarded as a constructive use of one's time, as immeasurably close as possible to the time that I had previously allotted to parenting, although I know that there is really no available placebo. I suppose that I could have taken on volunteer work, or become an activist for one cause or another. Certainly, there were many things that presented themselves as possibilities. But for me, based on the values that I hold and the influences that have shaped me, graduate-work most closely met these criteria, and I embarked on it with a passion and sense of urgency that I had never committed to anything, except my children. I sought comfort and personal retribution in this research.

My sense of myself as a part-time mother has had far-reaching implications for every aspect of my life, including the role that I assume as a teacher, and probably deepened the intensity of my emotional reaction to this particular episode. While I know for certain that the course of events that followed

my taking Matthew to school with me had nothing to do with me being a part-time mother - and I know this because it is a fact that I keep well-hidden. Many of my teaching colleagues, with whom I have worked for almost four years now, have no idea that I am a part-time mother. It is too painful a reality for me to readily, publicly admit, and I offer that assessment based on many years of experience in this role, some of which I will relate in subsequent chapters - my sense of myself as a part-time mother played an integral role in my emotional response to the aftermath of the episode. The actions that were taken against me by senior-level administration, the parent(s) and the local media, were, I believe, unduly violent and aggressive, and devastating for me. Taken in concert with many other events over the past nine years that ultimately resulted in me becoming a part-time mother, their actions seemed to me to be just another reckless conspiracy, another assault wrought against me by institutions.

For many years I believed, as I was so often told by persons familiar to me as well as a number of strangers, that I had in fact left my children. I know now that this was not, is not, will never be so. I know now that my role as full-time mother - that is, the socially-constructed position of mother as one who lives in constant physical proximity to her children - was usurped by the institutions of marriage, family and the legal system that I was made subordinate to.

It is difficult to articulate just how it is that being a

part-time mother becomes important to my inquiry. For many years I believed that it was really very irrelevant to my research, and did not need to be raised at all. But, in fact, I knew, at an intuitive level which I am now attempting to bring to a conscious level, that a primary motive for me to seek ways to honour the lifeworlds of my students within the curriculum that I offer is that a fundamental aspect of my own being has been reclaimed and redefined by institutions. The context of my own life has been integral in constructing and compelling both my pedagogical practice and my inquiry. It illustrates part of the "weave of relationships and structures" (Personal Narratives Group, 1989:19) that constitute my world and in this way, helps to explain the sense of violation that I experienced upon being informed that I should not have brought my son to school with me. But this still does not fully explain why or how being a part-time mother is central to my research.

As I struggled for over a year to find an entry point into this writing, a dissonance continually arose between what I felt obligated to write about and what I found myself actually writing. Each time I sat down to write about my students, which is what I thought I was supposed to be doing in order to fulfil my understanding of what the "good researcher" did - after all, I had spent hours and hours observing children, gathering fieldnotes, interviewing them, transcribing the tapes, reading, reading, reading anything I could find that seemed to be even remotely relevant to the work that I had set out to do - despite

all of this, I continually found myself writing about myself. It seemed that my own lived experience had erected an insurmountable wall between myself and the work that I had set out to do. I became intensely frustrated and discouraged. I almost gave up at many points, and tried to persuade myself that the reason I couldn't do the work was that I was simply not capable of doing it, that I would have to find some other way to compensate for not having my children with me on a full-time basis.

Again, collegial support played an integral role in helping me to re-orient myself to the importance of the task that I had taken up. Two of my friends, both women and themselves engaged in the struggle that befalls the graduate student whose work is motivated by their own personal challenges (although their challenges are very different from mine) took it upon themselves to support me and encourage me to continue. They know me well. They know how impassioned I am about this work that I have been attempting to do. They know what drives me. They know that I will not feel settled until it is done. My regard for their faith in me became both a challenge and an inspiration because I came to understand that I would not be letting just myself down if I were to quit. There are women in my life who are relying on me to raise the voice of a woman who has found herself in a position of compromise and subordination, and who believe that I am capable of doing it. Greene writes:

...we will see how various human beings...invented life-plans or projects for themselves in the light of readings of their lived worlds, sometimes with the help of others, sometimes (although seldom) alone. We will

see women unexpectedly refusing the constrictions of the domestic sphere, oppressed or excluded people reading barriers as surpassable. They were able, as it were, to discover their own freedom in a resisting world, but first they had to perceive it as resistant to desire...The wall has to be viewed as a personal challenge, as an obstacle; but it becomes such only to those risking free choice (1988:6).

The only wall that was standing in my way was my reluctance to admit and articulate that my stance as part-time mother was central to my research. I had not yet understood that not only was this central, but that I had to proclaim it as central in order for the purposes and motivations of my research to make any sense at all. Not only had I been trying to neglect the context from which my life was narrated, I also had to begin to acknowledge and assert that it was the fundamental reality of this context that motivated and sanctioned the research and the writing that I was attempting to do. It was my own lived experience that generated my concern about how to honour the lifeworlds of my students within the landscape that we shared - our classroom - because I had been shown so emphatically that my own lifeworld had no place there at all. The stories that I had been trying to write about my students were neither unimportant nor irrelevant. But I had not yet contextualized why it was that I wanted to tell them, why they were so important to me that I desired to grant them the status of my surrogate offspring, why I wanted to devote the care, attention and yes, even the love towards them that I would have otherwise devoted to my own children were they present in my life on a full-time basis.

As part-time mother, I present a socially-constructed

incongruity. I, as mother, have been startlingly apprehended and redefined by institutions. I have had to abandon many of the stereotyped, historically-bound notions of what a mother is and does. I have had to negotiate for myself a foreign but necessary way of being in my own world, with virtually no role-models to look to for guidance or to measure myself by or against.⁵ My own process of coming out from under the burden of socially-imposed expectations that no longer accommodated who and what I was led me to question the assumptions that many teachers seem to make about children and what their lives might be like.

Writing my story about what happened on that day that I took Matthew to school with me yields a vehicle through which I can begin to show how learning how to be a part-time mother has influenced my stance as teacher and as researcher. Further, by telling my own story first, I enable myself to speak with, rather than for or against (Alcoff, 1991) the children who have been put into my care, as students in my classroom.

2. The School Apprehends My Role As Mother

In my story, I responded to the memo that declared teachers'

⁵. I am certainly not saying that I am the first woman in history to become a part-time mother. What I am saying is that I do not know, and have not yet met in the course of my eight years in this role, another woman who has assumed this role, willingly or otherwise. The sphere of my own personal relationships has not given me access to any social or historical knowledge or experience about how to embody and live the stance that has been imposed upon me. This absence of prior knowledge probably explains why it has been such a difficult process for me, and why I have been so unwilling to publicly admit that this is, in fact, a fundamental circumstance of my life.

children must not be brought to school on future occasions under any circumstances, by writing "I wondered do these people have children, and have they ever taken them to school with them?" In retrospect, these were unfair questions for me to ask, and I debated deleting them from the text altogether. But, as I have already explained, I decided to leave them in because the anger that underscored my words, although it was misdirected, seems to reinforce and uphold the sense of violation that I felt.

Certainly, they were very emotional and, I think, inappropriate questions that called into question the ethical nature of senior-level administrators' actions as parents, rather than the appropriateness of their actions as administrators of a school-district, which was the stance they justifiably assumed as they dealt with the episode. It is also the only way that I know them. I do not know them as individuals or as parents, therefore I have no right to contextualize my reaction to their actions within their domains as parents. But it does not seem to me to be surprising or irrelevant that I directed my angry and aggressive judgment towards them as parents because it was just this role that I felt I was being denied access to.

On Friday, two days after I had taken Matthew to school with me, I was given a copy of the memo and met with two administrators, my principal and one senior-level administrator, when I was beckoned into a meeting the two of them were having. I had gone to the school-office during my lunch-break to do some photo-copying. As it happens, our photo-copy machine is right up

against the window that opens into the principal's office, so that anyone who is standing at the machine can look in and see what is going on. The curtains are rarely drawn. I immediately knew, upon seeing them together, what the meeting was about. I felt intensely disturbed that this meeting was taking place without my presence or my knowledge of its occurrence. It seemed inevitable that the individual - me - was going to be denied any voice at all in the institutional-handling of the matter. Once I had been seen by them, though, I was beckoned in. In a sense, I felt relieved and validated by their gesture. I have had extensive positive professional relations with both of them, and the professional part of me did feel vindicated by this apparent regard for me. Still, the reality is that my presence was incidental, rather than requested.

I didn't mention anything at this meeting about my personal history as mother of my children. To do so would have seemed to me to threaten my professional credibility. That is, I felt that I would be presenting the figure of the distraught, bereft mother rather than the figure of the responsible and conscientious teacher. Neither did I have a personal history with either of these administrators. Furthermore, the meeting was taking place in an office in a school which was most certainly institutional territory, and this sense of institutionalism pervaded the atmosphere of our meeting, in terms of the issues that were raised, the discourse that was permissible, and the stances we assumed in our own interactions. As the conversation unfolded,

it became clear that we were agents of the institution, not three individuals with life-histories that might bring a different, perhaps equally or more credible and urgent orientation to the events that had transpired. No questions were being asked of me. It seemed that the sole purpose for this meeting was to reinforce the message of the memo. The episode was being responded to without any acknowledgment of the individual or purposes that led to the act. Greene writes:

We shall be concerned with humane choosing...whatever is chosen and acted upon must be grounded, at least to a degree, in an awareness of a world lived in common with others, a world that can be to some extent transformed (1988:4).

There was no sense of the humane in this interaction, and there was certainly not any hint at all that we shared any common ground apart from our professional associations. Nothing in any of the aftermath of the day that I took Matthew to school with me suggested that there was a place here to consider why some parents make the decision to take their children to school with them; what it is about our individual lifeworlds that would compel us to make such a decision; nor how this experience might transform, to use Greene's word, or enhance the world that we jointly participate in as professionals.

Uninvited, I did state that I had other available options for childcare that I certainly would have pursued if I'd had any sense at all that my actions would be deemed inappropriate. There was no response. I shifted from mother to teacher, and asked "What are the implications of this for my own career?"

Again, my question was left unanswered. I countered the silence with "I'm serious! I have career aspirations! Are there going to be negative implications?" Again, no response. I did not know what to make of this silence. Perhaps it meant that implications were obvious, and my question was only a moot confirmation of my own naivete. Perhaps it meant that my professional career was not at risk at all, that I was being naive to presume a risk where there was none. Or, perhaps it implied a "wait-and-see" attitude, that my own future actions would determine the course of my career. I did not know. The only things I knew for certain were that I had brought my son to school with me for reasons already explained; that my action had been deemed inappropriate; and that I was never to bring him to school with me again.

The climate and content of this meeting, put together with the conditions that led to its occurrence and the mandate that was handed down by way of the memo, resulted in a strong sense of alienation on my part from this institution which houses my work. Ironically, it is just this potential for alienation of young children between their lives and their schools that I was exploring and seeking to compensate for within my pedagogical practice.

The history of an individual's experience provides a context for their actions, a lens through which to view the ways that the individual has chosen to act upon her/his world (Personal Narratives Group, 1989). While I would hardly expect any

spokesperson for the institution to ask me about the history of my motherhood - for to do so would be both ethically and legally inappropriate - just the same, it seems to me to be inappropriate that no administrative representative asked me about my own reasons for bringing Matthew to school with me. If they had asked me, I would certainly not have related the history of my becoming a part-time mother. This, to me, is private and personal territory. It is an aspect of my life that need not be entered into the domain of public discussion and is not requisite for a justification of my bringing Matthew to school with me. However, I think it would have been appropriate for someone to have asked me why I had brought him, thereby giving me the opportunity to speak to my own purposes and motivations. These would have differed little from those that I raised within the context of the story: "I enjoy having him there with me from time to time. It allows me to share my professional life with him, and it humanizes my role as a teacher by letting my students see that I am also a mother." Simply the fact of being asked would have been somehow honouring and respectful of the daily contributions that I make to this school district. Not being asked was, in my interpretation, a considerable slight of my professional commitment and integrity. Why ever, in view of my past history as educator and the corresponding demonstration of my commitment to the institution of the school, would anyone, regardless of their position, assume that I would take action that would seem to compromise the integrity of the school? I can

only think that senior-level administration has little regard for the efforts and dedication of individual teachers, and that they are unwilling to view the choices that teachers such as I make as holding any but their personal interests at heart. In this case, I believe they are most thoroughly mistaken and misguided.

Within the context of my role as a professional, I have never experienced the sense of confidence, complacency or presumption that would lead me to take action that would in any way over-ride what I believe to be my jurisdictional boundaries as a teacher. I brought Matthew to school with me because I believed that his presence for a day would not interfere with my professional obligations, and would if anything enhance my interpersonal relationships with my students.

If I should have asked anything of senior-level administration, perhaps I should have asked "Why did they not want to hear my story, and try to understand the events from my perspective? Why was my voice so irrelevant to their understanding of the events that transpired and their determination of how to deal with them and the aftermath? Why did they disacknowledge me as a teacher in their judgment of me as a parent, when in fact it is only my role as teacher that they have any jurisdiction over?" It may seem that they did in fact respond to me as teacher by the fact that they mandated that children must never again accompany their teacher-parents to school. Certainly, they were only responding to my professional engagement with my own child. By their actions, they seemed to

consider that my decision to bring my son to school was based only on my apparent need for childcare. There was no initiative on their part to try to understand my perspective or purposes.

Perhaps I am being unfair. Perhaps I should recognize and acknowledge that senior-level administrators are not individuals, that they are professionally required to act in the best interests of the institutions that they represent. But could we not then ask the same thing about children? Surely they, as a collective, represent an institution? Are the questions that I'm asking about how to honour the daily realities of individuals' lived experience only relevant to the powerless majority of inhabitants of the institution - the children? Surely this is not a democratic demarcation? When we speak of the possibilities for individual freedom from the oppression of institutions, are there only some who are entitled to this? And if so, who? Children? Teachers? Administrators? Are administrators, despite their obvious power, or because of it, less entitled to personal freedom and choice simply because of their inherent power? Or, perhaps this is exactly where change must begin? And if it should begin here, who should initiate it? Those who hold the power? Or someone like me, a teacher, who stands somewhere in the middleground, somewhere between possibility and oppression. By virtue of my stance, I do have some power, although there are others with more power who can override mine. I, too, am certainly oppressed, but I am not as oppressed as those who fall under my care. Perhaps, in this sense, I really

do have more power than anyone. I can resent the power that is held over me, but I am also in a position to challenge it because I have the intellectual resources to do so, and because I have access to the modes of discourse that such challenge requires.

"Are you my friend?" the little ones ask in nursery school, not knowing. The responses are also questions. If yes, then what? And if I push you away, how does that feel? (Paley, 1992:3).

These questions are not so different than the ones I ask. Even though I am an adult and can intellectualize their impact in such a way that I can attempt to distance myself emotionally from the harshness of the response that I became the subject of, the fact remains that like the title of Paley's (1992) book You Can't Say You Can't Play, I have most certainly been told, in no uncertain terms, that I can't play. Rules have been constructed and imposed with no regard to my own circumstances or sensibilities, and I have been most emphatically informed that my play was out-of-bounds. But, the fact is that I can play. I can ask hard questions. I can challenge positions of apparent privilege and power. When someone says to me, "You can't play!", I know just how to ask "Why not?" and "Who says?" The very act of being able to verbalize these responses ensures that I can play, and perhaps more dangerously, that I understand the rules of the game.

3. Someone Told On Me

Pedagogical intents are expressions not only of our theoretical philosophies of life but also of who and what we are, and how we actively and reflectively stand in the world (Van Manen, 1991:23).

I have already explained my pedagogical and parental intents in bringing Matthew to school with me, but I have not yet explored the possible motive that the parent(s) who reported me had; how this might have been the result of my pedagogical stance; and how it influenced my own pedagogy.

I have never learned for certain who it was who contacted the media, and if there was more than one person involved. I think that it is probably irrelevant and unnecessary to enter into a detailed explanation of my fruitless search to discover who it was, as much of it would be based on hearsay and rumour, and would therefore lack integrity as a meaningful part of my discussion. I would like to put forward, though, that a number of my sources, who were all professional colleagues of mine, had reason to believe that it was a parent of one of my students. I know these sources well enough to trust that they would not mislead me. I also know that the possibility that it was a parent was suggested to at least two of my colleagues by one of the members of the media who reported the story. Even though no names were given, and nothing was ever put down on paper to state who it was, I have chosen to respond as though it was a parent of one of my students who contacted the local media.

Although there is no way for me to ever know for sure who it was who told on me - and even the fact that I have fallen into using the playground jargon of being "told on" reveals that I felt like the naughty child whose cheating had been discovered - I think that because this episode had such an extreme impact on

my pedagogy and my motherhood, it behooves me to explore my relationship with the parents of some of my students within the year that this happened, in an effort to understand why an individual might take such action against the teacher of his/her child. It seems to me that this person must have felt as powerless against the institution of the school as I felt when I began to experience the consequences of the media-report. What were the circumstances within my own classroom that might have led to these feelings of parental powerlessness?

At the time, I was team-teaching with Cindi, and enrolled approximately twenty-five of our fifty Grades 1,2,3 students. Of these, eighteen of them had been in my classroom for the previous year, or two years. The parents of these eighteen students knew me well, and understood and accepted my pedagogical orientation. Many of them had requested that their children be in my class again for their second or third year in a row. Most of the remaining seven children were in Grade 1.

It was clear from the beginning of the year that many of the parents of the Grade 1 students were uncomfortable with the concept of an open-area classroom. They frequently expressed their concerns that it was too large a space; that the younger children were intimidated by the older children; that the younger children felt nervous and frightened most of the time. While I, as the teacher of these children, disputed most of these claims based on my observations of these children's daily behaviours and interactions in my classroom, I can also not ignore the fact that

many of their parents felt uncomfortable with their children's placement in this classroom setting.

Incidentally, these children had a different kindergarten teacher than the Grade 1 students who had entered my class the previous two years. I think that this might have been highly significant. The "new" kindergarten teacher had quite a different pedagogical orientation than the "old" one did. Where the "old" one encouraged independence and responsibility for one's own needs and behaviours - which closely matched Cindi's and my philosophy - the "new" one seemed to assume a stance wherein young children were considered to need considerable assistance in having their needs met. While I do not want to digress into a philosophical discussion of whose pedagogy might have been more enabling or limiting for these children who came to me as Grade 1 students, I think it is important to point out that their initial school experience was markedly different from that of their Grade 2 and 3 peers, who had also come to me as Grade 1 students but had a different Kindergarten teacher. Although I had noticed the difference in approach between these two teachers, I had not anticipated the potential impact this might seem to have on my own teaching practice.

The first two years that I spent in the Open Area were extremely positive ones, for me at least, and I think for most of my students. This may be an assumption on my part, but I also base it on the fact that so many parents came forward to request that their children be in my class for a second or third

subsequent year. I heard very little dissent from parents in my first two years in this position. This is not to say that they were all comfortable from the onset. There were most certainly moments of uncertainty and questioning. But these were more about our methodology as we strove to implement the progressivist philosophy of the Year 2000 Document and the accompanying Primary Program, than they were about whether or not our Open-Area classroom was an appropriate placement for their child. As each of the two years progressed, it became very evident that parents were generally pleased with our pedagogical practice and the experiences that their children were having in the learning environment that we provided.

Because this had been my past experience with the parents who lived in this community, I did not take the concerns of the parents of my new Grade 1 students very seriously. I chose, instead, to take the stance of the tolerant, understanding veteran. I was, perhaps, both arrogant and presumptuous. I just assumed that after a month or so, the concerns would die down once the parents observed that their children had settled in and begun to thrive, as their peers before them had done. This was not to be the case. Parental discomfort increased; anger began to mount; and many of them began to pursue other channels to voice their displeasure over their perceptions of my practice, particularly by going to my administrator who remained supportive of me, but was nonetheless required to contend with their anxiety.

It would be unethical and extremely biased for me to enter into a discussion of whether or not these parents' concerns and actions were warranted, and whether or not my own reactions and interventions were appropriate. Too much time has passed and too few written records were kept for me to attempt to recover the events that contributed to the breakdown of my relationship with these parents. Further, I am not sure that such an analysis is essential to my discussion. I have provided this much history because I think it is a necessary contextualization of my asking how it might be for a parent to feel so powerless against an institution that s/he would go to what I perceive to be such an extreme measure as a means of voicing discontent: by possibly turning to the media to object to an action that I had apparently taken as teacher. I am, of course, referring to my act of bringing Matthew to school with me - which was more the act of the part-time mother in me than it was the act of the full-time teacher.

The point I wish to raise is this: as much as I have presented myself as a victim of an institution, it seems that there also exists the possibility that I have simultaneously personified institutionalism. That is, I seemed to become teacher who disacknowledged parents according to my own pedagogical values and beliefs. It would seem that I ultimately took the stance against them that senior-level administration took against me. Now, some of my colleagues would argue this self-accusation, and defend me against my own accusation on the

grounds that I did attempt to communicate with these parents time and time again. I invited them into my classroom repeatedly, beginning with the daily Reading Time, and attempted to hear and address their concerns which certainly senior-level administration did not do with me. But I did not change my practice to appease them. The closest that I came to accommodating their discomfort with my pedagogy was to recommend that they remove their children from my class. This was not a choice that any of them made. It is important here to explain that all of the primary classes in my school were full, according to the maximum number of students permitted by Ministry and contractual regulations. The only option these parents had was to move their children to a different school, away from their neighbourhood, which they emphatically declined when I presented it to them.

I would also like to put forward my sense that the children of these parents seemed not to be so distressed. They seemed to be happy and enthusiastic individuals who had very positive relations with their peers and who participated successfully in our learning experiences. I had no reason to think that my program was somehow less suitable to their needs than it was for all of my other students. From my vantage point as teacher, they were thriving. Moreover, none of them seemed to be apprehensive about me. They frequently initiated conversations with me, wrote letters to me, drew pictures for me, and sought me out on the playground when I was doing recess-duty, all of which are very

typical behaviours of primary students. I did not notice anything about my relationship with this group of children that was markedly different from my relationship with my other students (although I am prepared to admit that an outside observer might have noticed significant differences that I did not detect. Perhaps I simply didn't want to see them? nor act upon the changes that my recognition would have imposed? Perhaps I sought professional complacency, and was determined to preserve my apparent institutional right to it, regardless?) Whatever, and I do not say that flippantly, it was very difficult for me to get a sense of the causality of the apparent conflict between the children's perceptions of me and that of their parents.

In as much as I have represented myself as harbinger of "institutionalism", to be fair to myself I must insist that my past experiences as a teacher have shown that I do endeavour to accommodate the needs of my students to the best of my abilities, utilizing whatever resources are available to me. I allotted more time to the children of these parents than was their due or that they required in an effort to appease their parents and prove to them that their children were at least safe, if not more in the environment that I provided, until the day that the newspaper story broke.

Many of these parents were in my classroom when I introduced Matthew, and explained why he was there for the day. Based on all of the allegations, suggestions and rumours, it seemed very likely that it was one of them who had phoned the media.

Further, I allowed the possibility that it was one of these parents to influence my pedagogical orientation to my students. Feeling quite stung, I withdrew from their children. Not completely, of course. I maintained my stance as teacher. But I found myself attempting to minimize my contact with them. It was unconscious at first. As I began to realize what I was doing, I consciously attempted to increase the amount of attention that I paid to them. But I resisted the physical contact that these children had frequently initiated with me - hugs, cuddles, holding hands. I continued to thank them for the pictures that they drew for me but I no longer hung them up on the bulletin board behind my desk. My relationship with each one of them became very formal and detached. I felt a deep sense of apprehension each time I approached one of them and found myself carefully measuring and guarding my words. Spontaneity was lost. If one of their parents had phoned the media about Matthew coming to school with me, what else might this parent do? How vulnerable was I? I did not know, neither could I predict nor anticipate.

The school-year carried on and ended. Most of these parents wrote letters to the principal requesting that their children not be in my class again. I suppose they thought that I would never read these letters. In fact, I did. At the end of June, when the Primary teachers met to discuss student placements for the

next year, the principal gave me⁶ a file-folder of letters from parents so that we could accommodate specific requests. As I read them, I felt both angry and embarrassed. I slipped them underneath a sheaf of papers so that none of my colleagues would be able to read them. Later I returned them to the file-folder. Even without these letters, I would have ensured that all of these children be placed in another teacher's classroom. Not only did I want to distance myself from these parents for my own protection, neither did I want to continue relationships with them when they were clearly discontent with my pedagogical practice. Ironically, I don't think that my practice is markedly different from the teacher who enrolled these students this year. However, she does not have the contentious history with them that I do.

These children continue to seek me out whenever they see me, in the hall, on the playground, and in the computer-room. As it happens, my preparation-time coincides with their scheduled computer-time. Because my role as Department Head requires a lot of "paper-work" that is expedited by using a computer, I am frequently in there at the same time as they are. They often

⁶. The Principal gave these letters to me because I was the Primary Department Head. This is a minor administrative position, delegated by the Principal following teachers' applications and interviews for it. Therefore, from an administrative perspective, it was entirely appropriate for me to have been given these letters because, as Primary Department Head, I was chairing the meeting at which we were planning class-lists for the next year. It was necessary for us to be aware of the requests that were contained within these letters in order to honour parental requests that their children (not) be placed with particular teachers.

choose the computer right beside me and ask me to help them. I honour their requests, but I continue to feel a sense of reluctance to engage with them.

I ran into one of their parents at a department store in December. We were both Christmas shopping for our children. She approached me with a smile on her face, and engaged me in a conversation. I was quite surprised by her apparent pleasure at seeing me. I responded politely, and spent a few moments chatting with her. But the unspoken words that were running through my head were "I know about the letter that you wrote asking that your child not be in my class again. Why are you being so friendly?" It was just this pervasive sense of distrust that characterized my relationship with these parents last year.

In my story, I related what one of my supportive parents said when I told her about the newspaper-report:

"Donna's first comment was "Oh, someone's getting dirty!" They are both aware that some of my parents are less than content with me this year! Donna also commented on how disappointed I must be. She said "This morning when you introduced Matthew, I thought "How nice for Joyce that she can bring her son to school with her. As a working parent, you don't have the opportunities we do to be a part of your child's school. I just thought how nice it was for you."

"Oh, someone's getting dirty!" she said. The antagonism of this group of parents had spread far beyond their relationship with me. Their discontent had become public knowledge. As a parent myself, I did feel a strong sense of empathy with their discomfort about their children's school experience. In hindsight, I wonder if I should have made drastic changes to my

program in order to honour their comfort-level. I am not sure why I dug my heels in as I did. Perhaps it was because I had committed so much time and energy into developing a pedagogical practice that I believed was potentially honouring of the lifeworlds of the children who became my students. Perhaps it was because I had already fallen victim to powerful and persuasive agendas that compromised my own integrity as a parent. Perhaps it was because I had the support of a teaching-partner who was not experiencing any of these problems with the parents of her own students. Perhaps it was because I truly could not see that the children of these parents seemed to be at any risk at all as students of mine. Perhaps this is the bottom-line, so to speak. I do believe that if I had any sense that my pedagogical practice was inhibiting their progress, then I would have acted differently. I would have made changes. But I could not see the necessity for any change to occur, beyond the possibility of attempting to appease discontent parents.

And yet, who am I as teacher to determine that I know what is best for someone else's child? The parent who reported me was entitled to their anger and discomfort. I hope that, whoever it was, this person had some sense that they had already explored other less drastic channels to make their voice heard. And there does remain the possibility that the person who contacted the media was not, in fact, discontent with my practice. Anyone who has read a newspaper on a regular basis over the last year or two will be cognizant of public disenchantment with teachers in

general. It seems that many people regard our jobs as easy ones. After all, we only work ten months a year; we have excellent benefits; we receive significant salaries. Moreover, there has been significant province-wide job-action on the part of teachers during the last year, and within the school-district that I work for this has resulted in teacher abstention from some activities that are considered part and parcel of the duties of teachers. It is possible that the person who contacted the media was not discontent with me, but rather, with the general state of affairs amongst the teaching profession at large.

Nonetheless, a number of people paid a price for the appearance of this story in our local media. The children who were my students suffered the reality that their teacher was now distrustful of them and their parents. The parents suffered the reality that their child's teacher responded by distancing herself emotionally from their children and from them. The teacher - me - responded by limiting her engagement with the children of these parents. Whatever the interpretation of the events that transpired may be, the reality remains that I distanced myself from these children and sent them off to another teacher as soon as I was able to. My pedagogical stance became secondary to my desire to remove myself from this position of controversy and conflict.

Someone told on me. While I was not named in the newspaper articles, my identity was far from secret. Almost anyone who wanted to know "who" it was, could easily find out. I was

publicly proclaimed to be an abuser of my professional position. The ultimate consequence for me was that I lost face. I lost faith. I became cynical and embittered. I lost interest in the lifeworlds of these particular children, despite the fact that it was just these lifeworlds that had driven and motivated my own pedagogical questioning and exploration from the onset of my career. This, I think, was a heavy price for all of us to pay. Perhaps it was the goal of the person who phoned the newspaper. Perhaps it was not. I do not know, and never will. Once again, all I know for certain is that I brought my son to school with me and that he will never come to school with me again.

4. Despite The Memo, Matthew Belongs With Me

At first, I did not think that this episode really held any long-term implications for Matthew. However, because his presence as my child figured centrally within the context of the events, I felt that it would be important to acknowledge how he may have been influenced by the situation.

As I already explained, he had made friends amongst my students on previous visits and slipped back easily among them on this particular day. His company was much sought after by most of my students, and each time that I paused to locate where he was in the midst of our other fifty students, I always found him happily and constructively engaged with a group of children. I also noticed that he engaged with Cindi and me as though we were his teachers. He put his hand up when he needed something and

waited for one of us to recognize him; he conferred with other students when he wasn't sure how to proceed with directions that had been given, or where to find something that was needed for the task that we had set. (Clearly, his behaviour showed that he had been institutionalized!) He did not come to ask me what he should do at recess or lunch-time. When the bells rang, he simply scurried out to the coat-room with the other children to fetch his lunch and his coat, without so much as a backward glance towards me. I had wondered if he would prefer to accompany me to the staffroom during these times, but his spontaneous departure with the others showed me that this was the choice that he was making, and it was an entirely appropriate one. There was no need for him to stay back with me, unless he chose to do so. I know my own son well. He is quite shy by nature, and often will hang back from a group of children while he assesses a situation and determines how he may fit into it. The spontaneity of his actions confirmed that he felt both comfortable and accepted, and any intervention on my part to act as mother was unnecessary and would probably have been an imposition. The only time that he approached me at my desk during the entire day was early in the morning when everyone was settling down to write in their journals. He came up to me and asked me for the notebook that he had used on a previous visit so that he could also write. I offered him a pencil, but someone else had already given him one. Clearly, my child was not imposing on my professional duties, and was not detracting from

the time that I needed to spend with my students.

Two days later, I made him aware of the newspaper story. When it "broke", so to speak, I approached his father on the doorstep of the home that he shares with Matthew, and Matthew was present for this conversation. I felt compelled to inform his father of the events that had transpired. I was concerned that Matthew might recognize himself in the newspaper story if he should read it, or hear some talk in his other home or at his own school about this episode that he was central to. I would have been naive to assume that no one outside of my own school would have any awareness of what had occurred. Not only was it published in the newspaper, but there were some extremely close alliances between members of my school's staff and the staff at Matthew's school that gave me good cause to believe that it would be an item of conversation at more than one dinner-table. In an effort to protect Matthew from any potentially negative publicity, I believed that it was important to relay the events to his father. Should Matthew come home to his father's house and feel a need to voice or discuss anything that he had heard about himself, it seemed to me to be necessary for his primary care-taker to be aware of what had unfolded, in order that he would be as fully able as possible to support any concern that Matthew might raise.

Matthew did not offer any comment during this conversation between his parents and seemed to be quite disinterested in it. He also seemed to be quite oblivious to the effect of this

episode on me. He never mentioned it again, but neither did I ever raise it with him again. I assumed that the outfall was irrelevant to him, that he had enjoyed his day and now it was done, and his life was simply continuing on.

But then something happened last summer that gave me cause to rethink my estimation of his interpretation of events. It was a seemingly insignificant event that I had forgotten about until I started to write this particular section eight months later and even then, it was only the process of writing about other details that stirred this memory for me and made me wonder about how Matthew might have been trying to make sense of his role as my son in this whole scenario.

Last summer I took him back to my school for a day to help me pack up my room, as I was moving to a new classroom. [I remember that I laughed inwardly with some bitterness that here, at the end of July, when everyone else was on holidays, it became permissible again for Matthew to accompany me.] Outwardly, I simply enjoyed the pleasure of his company and his presence.

He was not thrilled at the prospect of helping me move rooms. The day was sunny and bright, the school was hot and stuffy, and the beaches that we both love were beckoning. If nothing else, he complained, he could go out to the playground and play by himself. But there was much work to be done, and I cajoled him with the promise that this was the only day that I would make him help me. I asserted my adult sensibilities by explaining that if we could work hard today and get it done, then

the rest of our holiday could be spent in ways that we would both find more enticing: picnics and bike-riding, camping and going to the beach. My arguments were lost on him - he has become too old and sophisticated for such simple manipulations - and resigned to my determination, he took up a box and began to empty my desk-drawers into it. Despite his complaints, he quickly became intrigued by the small delights that my drawers yielded - stickers, the odd lollipop still wrapped in cellophane, a few hockey cards that I had confiscated over the years and forgotten to return. All of these unclaimed treasures became his and his usual good mood returned. Now he had two boxes - one for my things and one for his.

Then, amidst all of the clutter and paraphernalia of my desk drawers - old notes from parents explaining why their child was absent, obsolete permission slips for field-trips, teaching manuals and storybooks, single staples and broken bits of old erasers - he found his own notebook. He laughed when he saw it and pointed it out to me.

"Mom," he called out, "Here's my old notebook! What should I write in it today?" I laughed in return, and told him that it was summer holidays, and he didn't have to write anything in it unless he wanted to. He chose to write. He found a pencil in my desk - a brand new silver iridescent pencil. [I bought a dozen of them last year because I could never find a pencil when I needed one. I thought that these were distinctive enough that my trivial problem would be solved. They didn't work in the way

that I intended. I still could never find a pencil. What I did notice was that suddenly there were several children in our class who were all the proud possessors of silver iridescent pencils! How Cindi and I laughed over this! I did not reclaim them. What smaller gift could I give to any child who feels some need for a silver iridescent pencil to help them find a place of belonging!]

I had thought that all of the pencils were long gone, but Matthew found one more. He sharpened it and sat down at a student-desk. I told him he could sit at my teacher-desk if he preferred. Sometimes children like to be able to cross imposed boundaries, to take advantage of opportunities that are seldom afforded, like sitting in the teacher's desk rather than submitting to the typical relegation to the smaller child-sized ones.

"No," he told me, giggling. "I want to sit here." I did not think anything of it at the time beyond my own fond parental observation of my son who took such pleasure in asserting himself by choosing to sit once again at one of my student's desks, despite the apparent privilege that I had offered. Now I am wondering if this was his way of making sense of how it is to be the child of a teacher, by assuming the domain that belongs to my students and taking up the role of student by sitting in a child-desk and asking me what to write about. This is what he wrote:

"It is summer holidays, and I don't have to do anything that I don't want to do."

Here seems to be the complaint of a ten-year-old who has been commandeered by his mother to do work on a sunny summer's

day when much more exciting possibilities lay at hand. I was not so intrigued by what he wrote as I was by the fact that he chose to sit in a student-desk and write in a notebook despite the fact that, having asked me what he should write about, I had given him the option of not having to do any writing at all.

Now, eight months later, my intrigue moves beyond wondering if this was his way of making sense of how it is to the child of a teacher. I have become more concerned with exploring the possibility that he was, in fact, more deeply affected than I had realized by the outcome of his presence in my classroom that day last year. It cannot be an easy thing for a young child to learn that proximity to one of his/her parents has been deemed inappropriate. What other human relationship should come more naturally than the one that exists between parent and son or daughter? If there is anything in this world that one should be entitled to take for granted - and I am fully cognizant of the reality that many individuals learn very quickly that such will not be their due for circumstances that are often far beyond their control - just the same, it seems to me that a basic human entitlement, particularly for children, should be unconditional, ungoverned relationship with one's parents.

But Matthew found himself in a position where this basic human entitlement was not to be his. He stood on the doorstep of his home and listened to his parents, these people - his father and I - who had already exerted tremendous power and influence over the course of his life without any consultation with him,

discuss the reality that someone had decided that he should not have come to school with his mother, that he did not belong there, that he was not welcome, and that he will never be able to come to school with her again.⁷ Someone imposed a ruling that this interaction was inappropriate.

It is painfully easy for me to recall how my own cheeks stung, how my hands sweated and my heart pounded when I heard about the memo. I am somewhat distressed at my lack of recognition that my own son could have been affected in the same way that I was. At the same time, I am able to be gentle with myself. I know that when a person is in a position of distress, it is not always possible to look beyond self to see how others are experiencing the situation. But now that I have moved away

⁷. Six months after the original writing of this section, it has occurred to me that Matthew may have been making a much broader statement than the one that I claimed to perceive eight months after the day that I took him to school with me. Perhaps Matthew was also sending a message to his parents: those two supposedly omnipotent adults who had determined, with no consultation with him, the course of his own life. Despite my articulated perception that my entitlement to full-time motherhood was reclaimed and redefined by institutions; despite my accusations of being rendered voiceless, is there not the possibility that I have myself directed a similarly aggressive assault on the lived experience of another - namely Matthew, my child - that I have myself complained about and railed against? Neither one of us, neither his father or I, asked him who he wanted to live with. It is highly likely that he feels as voiceless as I do, even if he does not have access to the developmentally sophisticated modes of discourse that I have suggested are necessary for objection and action. I am not suggesting that Matthew may have preferred to live with me. I am simply suggesting that he may have liked to have been asked for some input into the decision that was made for him about where and how he would spend his childhood years. Someday I may have to ask him about this, if he does not first choose to tell me of his own accord.

from it and have begun to come to terms with it all, I am able to recognize the potential for distress that this whole situation held for Matthew. Now I wonder if by sitting down in a student-desk to write with a pencil in a notebook - an act that surprised me given that it was the end of July and he had already expressed his desire to go outside to play - Matthew may have been reclaiming his entitlement to be my son in this landscape despite the agenda of senior-level administration, just as he can be my son in any other landscape that we have or will share together, over and above complaints, newspapers or memos.

There are some things in this world that no one can ever take away from anyone. No one can ever change the fact that Matthew is my son, that I am his mother, and that wherever we are together, we have the right to be together. Perhaps this is what he was trying to say to me, to the institution, to the world-at-large, that sunny day last July when he chose to sit down at a student-desk in my classroom and write: *"It is summer holidays and I don't have to do anything that I don't want to do."* This may have been his way of asserting himself against the attempt of an institution to apprehend and redefine one of the definitive aspects of his being - his right to be my son, his right to have me as his mother within any given territory despite the assumed authority of those who claim to hold power over the terrain.

Mid-morning of that day, shortly after his writing was done, a few of my old students showed up, having seen my car in the parking lot. They invited Matthew to play with them. His box of

treasures was forgotten and he was gone again, out into the sunshine with some friends. I continued my work inside on my own, dismantling my classroom and readying myself to move forward once again into unfamiliar territory. As much as I cursed the dust and the pulling out of staples from the walls, and the sorting out of three years' accumulation of papers and books, I was so glad that my son was close enough to me that whenever I chose, I could simply step out the door to watch him for a moment as he played in the schoolyard. More importantly, he was aware of my presence and whenever he needed anything, he simply stepped inside the door towards me.

Or, perhaps, by coming back inside once in awhile, he was telling me that he had the right to be there. Maybe his returning was a way of claiming this territory - my classroom - as his own. After all, I was the one who had told him to leave, to go outside and play. Perhaps, just as he had refused my offer of the teacher's desk in favour of the child-sized one, he was also telling me that he had a right to be in that classroom, if and when that was a choice he wanted to make, at least on that particular day. I cannot say for certain what the message was that he was trying to convey. But I do know this: each time he stepped through that doorway, he entered territory where he was not only welcome, but where he belonged.

~ There are things in this world that a memo cannot change.

III. SEEKING COMMON GROUND

This chapter has yielded the opportunity for me to begin to address the pedagogical imperatives that have characterized my stance as teacher since the beginning of my career. I chose to write a story about an event which had implications that were very personal but nonetheless located me within the territory of the school. It is just this same personal location of the children who become my students that I seek to honour, recognizing how my own lived experience has become central to the work that I do.

I have had reservations about this chapter. I am very cognizant of the reality that it is primarily a narrative of my own experience. And yet, to me, as I stated at the beginning, there is something to be said for admitting one's own frailties and vulnerabilities. Somehow, my own experiences grant credibility to the arguments that I intend to pursue as I endeavour to become an activist for the right for empowerment of my own students. I cannot empower them. Empowerment is an individual task. All that I can do is provide a forum within which they may empower themselves. This is my goal: to seek ways to enable young children to claim the territory that they are required to inhabit as their own. This may seem an idealistic and naive objective. Yet when I regard the resources that Matthew drew upon to make his own voice heard, I find myself considering that what is most seriously lacking is not children's resources to raise their voices, but adults' ability to recognize

the resources that young children can and do utilize.

Ultimately, that is what this thesis is devoted to: the recognition and honouring of the means that individuals utilize to proclaim their existence and their entitlement to human regard for the conditions of their lives.

Chapter Three

EXPLORING MY OWN TERRAIN

To tell the truth is to tear aside the conventional masks, the masks adopted due to convention or compliance, the masks that hide women's being in the world. It is to articulate a life story in a way that enables a woman to know perhaps for the first time how she has encountered the world and what she desires to do and to be (Greene, 1988:57).

The terrain that I explore crosses and conjoins the borders of the various sites of all of my subject-positions. It includes everything and everyone that I have been and become up to this particular moment. Little of my lived experience, if anything, is exempted from its boundaries. I am where I write, and I write where I am.

But, who am I when I am writing, and where is it that I write? What is my vantage point? What does the landscape beyond my window look like, and how is my view of it relevant to my inquiry? Why do I need to explore my own terrain in order to entitle myself to pursue what I have stated is my primary objective: emancipatory pedagogical practice?

As Greene suggests, "To tell the truth...is to articulate a life story in a way that enables a woman to know perhaps for the

first time how she has encountered the world" (1988:57). Autobiography, then, becomes an essential component of my inquiry, although it does not stand on its own, and can bear little resemblance to emancipatory pedagogy if it is not interpreted within the context of the larger picture. Yet, its singular distillation and influence cannot be ignored, for autobiography is "...a way of returning to ourselves. Lost to others, past and present...autobiography means being still, slipping back inside, being in this body, in this world, intact, whole. Alive, in time" (Pinar, 1992:93). By writing first about myself, I locate myself as a being who is alive and living. I make it possible for me to write about the lifeworlds of my students by writing about myself before I venture into their own domains. In this sense, I begin to dismantle the institutionally-constructed barriers that separate the knower from the learner. I, the teacher, refuse the mantle of the knower, and become learner alongside my students. My refusal makes it possible for all of us to explore alternative ways of being within the institutions that seem to esconse us and to divest us of the very things that could enable us to make sense of our lives.

Anne-Louise Brookes has critically examined her own attempt to distance her lived experience as an incest-survivor from her academic work.

Each attempt to research and write differently brought me back to the fact that I, or someone else, was describing the realities of others from our own perspectives. Not only was I describing the realities

of battered women from my perspective, but I was doing so in the detached manner of an academic researcher. I felt like the ghost writer writing as the other...Reproducing what I considered to be the norms of objective research, I wrote in a manner which rendered invisible the *actual* experiences of women...I knew that I must find out how I as "the researcher" was located in the research process. In effect, I decided I could not begin to understand this problem until I could learn to examine the conditions of my own abuse (1992:11).

So it has become for me. I must examine the circumstances of my own oppression and "go public" with it because it provides such a critical link to understanding my motivation to pursue emancipatory pedagogical practice. In Chapters One and Two, I made many references to how becoming a part-time mother has influenced my stance as teacher. Now I am going to explore the terrain that I inhabit wherein the reality of my part-time motherhood is undeniable - my own home: the place where I reside with my children when they are here, and by myself when they are away.

I. COMING OUT FROM HIDING

Geoffrey has approached me in tears. He leans towards me, his hands gripping the edge of my desk, gulping for air and trying to speak. He has drawn his picture on the paper horizontally rather than vertically, so now it won't fit the card he is making his dad for Father's Day. In my present state of bereavement, I am sympathetic and sad, but mostly envious. I do not smile gently, as I often do at little tears over little troubles. I hold him close, wishing that I too could cry. We soon find a solution together - I will trim it for him on the paper-cutter so that it will fit just so. Oh, that life should be so easy! That I should be able to trim away my own sorrow with one razor-sharp slice of the blade! [Fieldnote, June 16, 1992].

A month had passed since my ex-husband remarried and another woman moved in with my children.⁸ Prior to their marriage, I had been living very close to my children's schools and only a short drive from the home they shared with their father. They often came over to my house after school to spend the afternoons with me before their father picked them up on his way home from work, even though these "extra" visits were not legally my due. Upon the marriage, my children were moved to a new home in another suburb and changed schools. The afternoons together were lost; I had not been consulted about the move; and a woman who was a complete stranger to me was now living with my children. I had never met her, not even once! I felt quite unable to face the reality even though I should have seen it coming and started to prepare myself for it - I simply did not want to witness this shift in my own history. I abandoned my house because I couldn't imagine how I would continue to live there without the frequent presence of my children, and I moved back to my parents' home. I stayed there for five months, pausing to muster the strength and courage to face what had already been fact for six years - that I was inevitably and irreversibly a part-time mother.

Although...the category of storytelling represented by the above monologue can help relieve some of the pressure of an emotionally charged and disconcerting experience by allowing us to put it into words and share it with another human being, there is a danger that the relief can become so satisfying in itself that it prevents us from seeking an understanding of our experience that we have the power to achieve. Tautness

⁸. This event was the reason that I had been away from School for a month, as I related in Chapter One (Footnote #3).

relieved by lamentation with a subsequent building towards more tautness can become the rhythm of our lives, and we can get into the habit of saying, once we have relieved the pressure by telling our story, "There, that feels much better; I'll be able to get back to work now," instead of saying, "There, that feels much better; now I will be able to sort out the event that has so upset me and make changes to improve the situation."

Of course, even when we do turn our attention to sorting, understanding does not always come easily (Adan, 1991:66).

I was much more than disconcerted by these events, and I have not yet found a way to say to myself "There, that feels much better." Even after the passing of a few years, it does not feel very good at all. Although, as Adan has warned me, understanding does not always come easily, I have chosen to try to come to terms with this stricken situation.

The next narrative that I am going to relate is called Wisteria Vines. It was the first piece that I wrote in my present home, the place that I moved to upon departing again from my parents' home. I am just down the hill now from my children's new home, the place where they reside with their father. It was more than a year after writing this story that I began to truly understand its central significance to my inquiry. At first I resisted its telling because it seemed to be too deeply personal and despite my acknowledgement that my life and my work are necessarily intertwined, I was not sure that this particular story afforded a bridge between the two. Yet, it would not let me go, would not sit quietly and patiently on the shelf, waiting for me to finish my "work". Now I have reached the point where I recognize that I must tell it in order to fully explicate why and

how these stories about my own lived experience have compelled me to question and challenge the institutional subordination of the children who are my students.

By the very fact that I have been writing almost exclusively about my own territory, it seems to be necessary for me to explore it in order to contextualize my research. I may digress momentarily while I recount reminiscences of a few particular children, but I simultaneously raise the spectre of my own situation by always choosing stories about them that speak to my own grief. I continue now to become a meaning-maker of my own experience and lifeworld so that I can pursue my exploration of the dialectical relationship between my life and my work.

I enter the site of my home now, my new home, the place where I am finally learning to how to be a part-time mother.

WISTERIA VINES

Frog pushed Toad out of bed. He pushed him out of the house and onto the front porch. Toad blinked in the bright sun.

"Help!" said Toad. "I cannot see anything."

"Don't be silly," said Frog. "What you see is the clear warm light of April. And it means that we can begin a whole new year together, Toad. Think of it," said Frog. "We will skip through the meadows and run through the woods and swim in the river. In the evenings we will sit right here on this front porch and count the stars."...Then he and Frog ran outside together to see how the world was looking in the spring.

- Arnold Lobel

I am seated at my new white desk. I like white...it is bright and shiny and clean, and seems to afford such clear and

untainted possibilities! I have placed my desk in front of the second-bedroom window of my new home. This room is two things: my study, and the bedroom of my children when they are here. I have been a bit apprehensive about living mainly alone again, and I did procrastinate as long as I could. I have been living with my parents up until now. This desk, built for me as it was by my father, offers a comforting connection between the new home and the old.

I was driven back to their home several months ago by a world which even I, impenetrable fortress that I thought I was, could not contend with. Now it is time to move on again, to face the challenges that await me. I didn't really like this place when I took it. There were not many windows and I wondered how I would live without the light of day shining in. But a few things appealed to me, and made its habitation seem to be at least a tolerable prospect. The first was the proximity it afforded to my children, who live just up the hill from here with their father. I am also much closer to the school where I teach, and to many of my friends who live in this area. Together, these compelled me to move in, so that I would be close to all of these very important aspects of my life, especially my children.

And besides, over this window that I now look out from, a thick, twisted mat of green-purple wisteria vines grew, clamouring over the wood-framed awning above the window, drooping tendrils swaying gracefully over the edge in the fall breeze, alive with darting, chirping chickadees and sparrows. I was

drawn to the unencumbered sprawling and dancing of these vines, to the life that resided within and about them. They seemed to tell me that one could sprawl and dance, could from time to time share one's space with others, and then in the midst of solitude, still take comfort in some sense of being and belonging.

Sitting here now, I look out through white lattice fence-tops, over grey-shingled roofs, and my view ends at a ridge of black-green cedars and naked, leafless elm trees. It is autumn. A slight drizzle falls from the thick, grey blanket of clouds that obscures the sky, but I have to look very hard to see it. It is loud more than visible. Through the open window, I hear the gentle, resonating tap-tap-tap of raindrops on my pebbled courtyard, and I know to look for the rain, just as the songs of chickadees and sparrows reminded me of the presence of the wisteria. Even when I wasn't seated at the window, I could still hear the birds through the open window, just as I can hear the voices of my children ring up the hall from this room and sense their presence although they are not here now.

Neither are the wisteria vines. The gardener came yesterday and cut them down, despite my protests.

"They are growing into the eaves-troughs and pulling them down," he explained, patiently at first, and then less so as he realized my displeasure.

"Not all of them," I pointed out. I was at once angry and fearful, but tried to control my emotions, hoping to sway him with my argument. I was hoping that diplomacy and politeness

would serve my own ends.

"Look," I said, pointing to the vines, "These two stalks are only growing across my awning, and nowhere near the eaves. Can't you leave them at least?" I wondered how I would be able to work if they were no longer there. But then, I wondered that about my own children, too, and I seem to still be working. Can one, in any fairness or reasonableness of mind, compare one's children to wisteria vines?

He shrugged his shoulders, tiring now of my insistence and lack of compliance, and only said "They'll grow back in the spring."

"But," I wanted to say, "it is only autumn now. Spring is months away. And this wisteria was one of the reasons I moved here." (I could hardly tell him about my children, this veritable stranger who was only here to do what he perceived to be his job. I knew he didn't want to hear about my children. He would probably have regarded me as tedious and pathetic, and I did not want to be construed as either. And besides, I didn't want to tell this stranger about my life.)

"Their sprawling and dancing soothes me," I wanted to say, "And the chickadees and sparrows delight me. Please leave them." But I didn't speak. My anger prevented me from speaking. My children were there. They have witnessed enough of my anger, directed towards their father. I decided that it was better for me to live without the wisteria than for them to contend with more of my anger. I was working very hard to show them that we

could dance and sprawl together in this place, even if it was only from time to time, rather than continually as I would have preferred. And so, I did not speak.

I did wince, though, as he began to cut. No, he hacked with huge, cold, unfeeling metal blades. He hacked them down. [In retrospect, I cannot help thinking how different was the motive behind this blade than the one that put an end to Geoffrey's tears!]

Now there is a forlorn and battered clump of wisteria vines only a few feet high, in the corner of the fence beneath my window. I have to stand up, lean over my desk and crane my neck to press my nose against the ice-cold glass which steams up from my breath as quickly as I strain to even glimpse their savaged remains.

My view of the cedars and elms is a bit clearer now, and certainly they do possess their own stalwart and majestic beauty. But there are no more dancing, sprawling, promising tendrils of wisteria vines dangling before my eyes, and the chickadees and sparrows have moved over to my neighbour's yard. Her wisteria is thick and matted, and its tendrils sway in the autumn breeze. I wonder if she has a desk, and is it placed at the window which the wisteria overhangs?

"Never mind," I console myself. "They will grow back in the spring." As my children and I walk out to my car on the way to taking them back to their other home, I see a rhododendrum bush outside of my gate, which I had not noticed before.

"Look," I say, pointing it out to them. "In the spring, this rhododendrum will bloom." I am already envisioning the glorious blood-red blossoms, their beauty and scent infusing this place which is my new home and I know that I can be sure of the rhododendrum blooming in spring. I know that on warm spring days that happen to fall on my weekends, my children and I will be outside together. We will be tending the garden bed that harbours the blossoming rhododendrum, as we await the re-awakening of the wisteria.

II. GLIMPSING POSSIBILITIES OR HOW WISTERIA ENABLES A VIEW

When I first wrote this narrative, I was surprised at my intentness and insistence toward conveying my experience with the wisteria vines as accurately and completely as possible. I did not recognize for over a year that the wisteria vines were a metaphor for me. I succumbed, once again, to my intuition for try as I might, the story would not let me shrug it off. It seeped out of me, as preciously and insistently as the vines themselves had clamoured over my awning and up the eaves-troughs. Perhaps then, the most significant aspect of this narrative is that, chronologically, it marks the point at which I began to yield to my intuition by the very act of writing it, and so began to assume my right to speak for myself.

All along my intuition has played a significant role in my determinations about how to proceed with my inquiry. In many ways, this research and this writing has been a process of

articulating my intuitive sense of why I feel so compelled to persevere with this project. While intuition may seem to be a haphazard orientation towards research, I explain my reliance on intuition by asserting my sense that action is not necessarily bred of conscious thought. Action may reveal intent and urgency that was not previously recognized. For me, it is often my reflection upon the intuitive action that I have taken that enables me to see most clearly what it was I was attempting to accomplish. Intuitive action is neither arbitrary nor irrelevant. Indeed, it speaks most loudly to why fundamental human reactions occur in the ways and places and times that they do.

Everything that can be thought, the entire content of cognitive workings, is either directly or derivatively a product of intuition, deposited for thought by intuitive representation...Intuition is that function that contacts objects directly in phenomena. This direct contact yields what we might call "knowledge" in that it guides our actions and is precipitated by our own quest for meaning...some things that are intuited, for example, feelings in others, may be represented first and most directly to the dynamic faculty, thereby inducing an "I must do something!" response (Noddings & Shore, 1984:56-7).

A reliance on intuition, then, is not a thwarting of deliberate or mindful activity. Rather, honouring intuitive action by looking back at it and reflecting upon it, is to me a most powerful means of making sense of where one stands in the world. It is just this stance that I have become so curious to explore. When I found myself in a position where I felt compelled to write about my students but could only write about myself, I became very curious about the intuitive sense I had

that I must begin with myself. While I spent a year trying to deny that I had any right at all to write about myself, now that I have begun to accept this inevitability, I trust and respect my own intuition about what I must do and why I must do it.

In her article, "The Problem of Speaking For Others", Alcoff raises the provocative dilemma that by representing others through writing about them, the writer constructs the subject-position of the other (1991:9). In my own research, I have been concerned with seeking ways to write about the children who are my students so that their own words contribute to my construction of their subject-positions, so that I am not the sole constructor of how their realities appear in my words, so that I cannot be accused of oppressing them to attain my own ends.

However, as I continue to find myself writing about myself, constructing my own subject-positions and often including in these constructions the presence of my own children and/or the children who are my students, another dilemma arises. Initially, I believed that I was utilizing my own lived experience so that I could speak with (Alcoff, 1991), rather than for or against, the children who are my students. Now, I begin to recognize that I am utilizing the stories of my students and my children to enable me to speak for myself. This is quite different, I think, from the dilemma of a teacher who tries not to misappropriate the words or experiences of her students and children as she seeks ways for them to release themselves from their own oppression.

And so, this becomes the story of a woman on a road by

herself, who tries to gather resources along the way that will help her to make it to her journey's end. While I may feel alone as I chart the fledgling territory of the part-time mother, I am not alone as a person who yearns to find a way to speak for herself. There are many women like me who have found themselves amidst territory that is foreign and often disenchanting (Alexander, 1993; Ashton-Warner, 1963; Brookes, 1992; Polakow, 1982; Rich, 1976). As individuals caught up in our own life circumstances, we can only draw upon the resources that are available to us. This drawing upon has been exceedingly difficult for me because I have been trying to avoid the most informing resources that I have - the stories from my own life. My disclosures about my loss qualify, substantiate, and indeed, demand my inquiry.

A feminist pedagogy requires us as teachers to make visible to and explore with our students the aspects of our own life histories that impact on our teaching. We must analyze the relationships between our individual biographies, historical events, and the broader power relations that have shaped and constrained our possibilities and perspectives as educators (Middleton, 1993:18).

I began by trying not to relate my own history. I was hesitant to include details of my own life, worrying that I could be accused of "therapeutic narcissism." But I have learned that my history is inescapable and must be written. I must reveal the context of my life within my home because I have recognized the extent of its influence on the other domains of my existence. My life at home becomes part of my fieldwork.

Anthropologists seem of two minds with regard to

explicating decisions and field experiences. One set considers it *de rigueur* as a part of method and claims that ethnographies without it are meaningless. Another set views it as "confessionals," tainted either by surreptitious attempts to write autobiographies or by publicizing unnecessary closet guilt (Whittaker, 1986:xx).

It is possible that my writing could be regarded as a "confessional", as an effort to garner sympathy towards the circumstances of my life. However, I would like to counter any characterization of my writing as "therapeutic narcissism" by stating that we must never presume to know how life is for another being. We must never presume to know what it is that might make someone else weep or rejoice, or simply pause for awhile in the midst of some moment of contentment of disenchantment. We must never ever presume to know. As soon as we begin to presume, we begin to lose the possibility of true and genuine human interaction and understanding.

Relating my own stories does not privilege me to claim any insight into the lived experiences of my students. Any assumption on my part of such self-imposed privilege would be arrogant and would only contribute to children's dispossession of their own stories. What telling my own stories does accomplish, though, is a declaration of my understanding that every individual has a unique life-story; and that what may seem to be on the surface, may not exist at all, or at least, may exist in a way that is very different from what we may interpret according to the frames of reference that have been cast by our own lived experience, or imposed upon us by our membership in particular

social orders.

Wisteria Vines has revealed, through fact and through metaphor, the extent of my subordination within some of the places that seem to have been my homes. In the next section of this chapter, I will endeavour to show how, having been deprived of any sense of entitlement over what happens in the places where I live, I seek out other resources available to me, in order to make sense of just how it is for me to be a part-time mother; what that in fact means; and how the understandings that I have arrived at have enabled me to challenge the institutions that have imposed this subject-position upon me.

Phenomenology took me home and extended the horizons of educational theory to embrace the passion, politics and labour of reproduction. I was not the only one of us to turn to the life world of the family to understand the child and our own understandings of education. For many of us the family is the place of feeling. There sound and touch compete with sight. Sensual, engaged, caring, it appears to offer us a first nature much richer than the culture of the public world, and we fall to the task of describing it with earnest effort (Grumet, 1988:63).

III. SEEING MORE CLEARLY

PLACING MY DESK

"I am seated at my new white desk. I like white...it is bright and shiny and clean, and seems to afford such clear and untainted possibilities! I have placed the desk in front of the second-bedroom window of my new home. This room is two things: my study, and the bedroom of my children when they are here" (Wisteria Vines).

"...it intrigues me that you put your writing desk in the

children's room," my professor wrote to me. I, too, was intrigued by his comment. I did not know him well, and had initiated my student-relationship with him upon the suggestion of another professor with whom I'd had several lengthy discussions about the nature of my work and what I hoped to accomplish. I did not have an academic history with Stephen, and I had approached him tentatively and cautiously. The writing that I felt compelled to do was deeply personal and I felt very much at risk, "baring my soul" as it were to a veritable stranger - although in some ways, he was not at all, for his son had been my student for a year.

My intrigue over his comment was coupled with a discomfiting sense of exposure. I had deliberated at length as to where I would put my desk in my new home, and was somewhat taken aback that its location had summoned the interest of someone who had no connection to my home-life. I had included my internal debate indirectly, almost as an aside, an irrelevant detail that could be eliminated. But it was just this particular detail that he had seized upon and, albeit gently, questioned.

When I moved into my - our - new home, placing my desk in my children's room seemed a reasonable decision for a number of reasons. First, the room would not be used when they were not here, and so it seemed sensible to make some use of a place that would otherwise be frequently vacant of human activity. As well, I do not study when they are here, so their presence would in no way inhibit my research, nor would my studying require that I

invade the space that is theirs for sleeping; for playing games on the computer that I only use for my writing; for talking on the phone to their friends out of earshot of Mother; for doing their own homework at this same desk; or for closing the door behind themselves when they want some solitude, or a place to be alone with a friend. I also thought that by keeping my books and disorder of papers in a room away from the central living area, we could use that space for the actual living together that the everydayness of life requires. In anticipation of their arrival, I always tidy my things away and ready the room for them, making sure their books and toys are always in the same places so that it will become a familiar and, hopefully, welcoming and comfortable site that they can call their own, if they choose to do so.

Besides all of these considerations which influenced my decision, none of which are insignificant and all of which do signify the primacy of my children in my determinations about how I will actually carry out the daily living in this place whether they are here or not, besides all of these was the view that I have from this window that I placed my desk in front of:

...over this window that I now look out from, a thick, twisted mat of green-purple wisteria vines grew, clamouring over the wood-framed awning above the window, drooping tendrils swaying gracefully over the edge in the fall breeze, alive with darting, chirping chickadees and sparrows...Sitting here now, I look out through white lattice fence-tops, over grey-shingled roofs, and my view ends at a ridge of black-green cedars and naked, leafless elm trees (Wisteria Vines).

But even beyond the trees there is the everpresent vastness

of the sky, for this home is situated with its back to the upward slope of the mountain that it is built upon. So, although in a sense my view does end, in another sense it is boundless and uninterrupted. Considering the circumstances which forced my moving here, such an unobstructed vantage point seemed a hopeful and optimistic metaphor for the changes in my life that I have had to reconcile myself to. The open expansiveness outward seemed to me to be empowering. It seemed to put me back in control of my own circumstances and offer me a sense of hope that I could find some comfort and peace here. If I had any doubts at all about whether or not to place my working desk at this window, it was to ask myself whether or not I was being selfish at putting myself in the midst of my children's room, instead of leaving it as a place that they could make entirely their own. But all of these other reasons over-ruled my wondering about this, and I did decide to put my desk here.

I thought no more of it. I moved in, settled myself, and began to work here. I wrote a paper about institutional oppression, which included Wisteria Vines. Stephen returned it to me in person, and was attempting to have a conversation with me about it as I read through his comments. No, this is not quite right. I tore through the paper, madly seeking out each and every pencil mark that he had made, seeking his affirmation of my work. I could not, within this meeting, stop and digest his comments and so I put it aside until I was back at home. Later, by myself at my desk, overlooking my view of the cedars

and naked elms, I slowly read through his comments and, as I mentioned at the beginning, was particularly struck by his curiosity about placing my desk in my children's room partly because its placement had been such a dilemma for me, but for another reason besides.

About three years ago, I was at his home although I was not yet his student and I do not know if he even knows I was ever there. His son and another child, both of whom who were students in our open-area class that year, had invited Cindi and me to his house for lunch one day during Teacher Appreciation Week. The first thing I saw when I entered his home was a desk in the midst of the living room with a computer sitting on it. I remember thinking these words, more or less, to myself "How strange to have one's desk in the middle of the living room! Why ever would someone want it there?" I do not know whose desk it was, and much of the memory of this luncheon has long-since faded. But it came back to me again when I read his comment on my paper "...it intrigues me that you put your writing desk in the children's room." My curiosity is not idle, but is part of my searching for an answer to how or why putting my desk in my children's room enables me - if it does - to feel some connectedness to them, to feel like a mother, even when they are not here.

In a 1930 [Virginia] Woolf journal entry: "I cannot yet write naturally in my new room, because the table is not the right height and I must stoop to warm my hands. Everything must be absolutely what I am used to...I am stuck fast in that book." Woolf was certain that women needed rooms of our own for work and decried the economic dependency that denied that privacy. The woman who has chosen to teach because this work also

permits her to be home with her family particularly craves a space that bears her signature, holds her resources (Grumet, 1988:92).

Grumet was, undoubtedly, referring to women who live full-time with their children. The issue she raises is that mothers constantly wrestle with self-accusations of guilt over the potential for their work to encroach upon their families, and to distance or distract them from what should, according to prescribed social and cultural expectations, be the primary focus of their intentional activity - the caring and nurturing of children. Woolf and Grumet together assert that it is critically important for women not to lose themselves in the work they do for their family.

Teaching, like mothering, is a nurturing, care-giving activity. I must confess that one of the reasons that I chose teaching over other potential professions was because it would enable me to keep the same hours and holidays more or less that my children would have. There were also many teachers in my extended family, historically and currently, and so it was a role that I was familiar with and could easily envision myself taking up. When I made the decision to become a teacher, I already had my children and it was not even remotely comprehensible at that point that I would eventually become the parent who did not live full-time with them. Now, as woman who is teacher but who is also part-time mother, I contradict Woolf's assertion, which Grumet supports, that women who are mothers and workers, need to find or create their own space within their homes, where they can

pursue the nurturing and development of self, away from the impositions and constraints of family and child-raising that constrict or inhibit them becoming individuals in their own right.

I can relate completely to Woolf's frustration with her new desk. The height of mine was also unfamiliar when it was new, although I commented that the colour - white - was appealing and "...seemed to afford such clear and untainted possibilities" (Wisteria Vines). I did find that the keyboard-shelf on my computer-table was a bit too low. I took the cutting board from the kitchen and placed it underneath the keyboard so that its height would be more accommodating. Now each time the keyboard shifts slightly off the cutting board, the knife lines upon it are revealed - and I pause momentarily to acknowledge that I do have tangible evidence of my caring and care-giving to my children, at least on the face of this scarred and carved-out cutting board - and then set it straight and begin my work again.

It seems to me that as much as my position contradicts the assertion of Grumet and Woolf that mothers who are workers need their own space and place to become and be themselves, my placing of my desk in my children's bedroom, and the use of the cutting board to elevate the keyboard achieve the same end-goal, although the routes to self-attainment are profoundly diverse and distinct. Most mothers are constantly caught up in the self-consuming activity of family life and need to create a place to call their own. But I have a place which is more of my own than

I want. My work-place requires the trappings of family life - the cutting-board and the desk in the children's bedroom: these serve to reassure me that I am more than teacher and researcher, that I am also mother even when my children are not here.

I cannot ignore the irony of my position when I set it against the struggles for personal time and space that most mothers endure, and many rage against (Grumet, 1988; Rich, 1976). Rich, in particular, makes vehement charges against the seizure of women's identity within patriarchy. Again, she refers to the reduction of women to being only mothers, and even in the role of mother, being essentially powerless and voiceless against the seemingly indomitable strength of patriarchal institutions. And yet, as a young mother, my identity, too, was seized by patriarchy, reclaimed and redefined by the very fact that I ended up without my children. I have no wish to enter into the laboured and lengthy explanation of just how this seizure came about. What I must acknowledge, though, is that I didn't even know how to fight against it. I accepted what I was told - that I was not entitled to my children. I became what I was told I was - "the bad mother." I was not, am not "a bad mother." I may have been "a bad wife" - and even this accusation I can argue against with utmost conviction although I will not do so here - but I am not, and never was "a bad mother."

- Reading of the "bad" mother's desperate response to an invisible assault on her being, "good" mothers resolve to become better, more patient and long-suffering, to cling more tightly to what passes for sanity. The scapegoat is different from the martyr; she cannot teach resistance or revolt. She represents a terrible

temptation: to suffer uniquely, to assume that I, the individual woman, am the "problem" (Rich, 1976:277).

I, too, invested almost all of my energy into proving that I was truly a "good mother." I believed that I was the problem. I assumed complete responsibility for no longer being a full-time mother. It never even occurred to me for many years, long after my re-definition was irreversible that I might have had a choice. The fact that I waited, unconsciously, for someone else to tell me that perhaps I didn't need to be relegated to part-time mother, only convinces me further of the extent to which I was subordinated to the institutions of family, marriage, and the legal system. "I" truly did not exist for anyone. "I" was unseen, invisible. I did not make myself present, I did not know how to make myself present. I was shocked into inaction when the very role that I defined my essential being by was rendered non-existent.

It is probable that if I had not been redefined as a part-time mother, that I would both empathize with and understand the frustration and rage that many mothers experience when they find they have no time for themselves. It was a position that I was clearly prepared to take up for myself. I abandoned my own university-career to work at "blue-collar" jobs while my ex-husband continued his studies. I put my children into day-care, even though I wanted to stay home with them. I completely disregarded myself and my own needs - never mind those of my children - in an effort to become the "good wife and mother" that seemed to be socially and culturally expected of me. It wasn't

until years after I became a part-time mother that I recognized how I had been thwarted, used, taken advantage of.

What woman, in the solitary confinement of a life at home enclosed with young children, or in the struggle to mother them while providing for them single-handedly, or in the conflict of weighing her own personhood against the dogma that says she is a mother, first, last and always - what woman has not dreamed of "going over the edge," of simply letting go, relinquishing what is termed her sanity, so that she can be taken care of for once, or can simply find a way to take care of herself?...if we could look into [the mothers'] fantasies - their daydreams and imaginary experiences - we would see the embodiment of rage, of tragedy, of the over-charged energy of love, of inventive desperation, we would see the machinery of institutional violence wrenching at the experience of motherhood (Rich, 1976:279).

Again, I, as I am embodied as part-time mother, apparently challenge the socially-constructed dogma that I am a mother, first, last and always. But in fact, I am a mother, first, last and always, despite the institutional assault on my entitlement to be so. I have learned this about myself and for myself, and for my own children as well. How must it be for them to have been so blatantly shown and told by so many people that their mother didn't want to be with them, didn't deserve to be with them? I think that I have repaired most of the damage done to our - my sons' and mine - relationship. But it has been with little help from anyone. It has been an independent struggle and I have had to fight desperately to reclaim my entitlement, against many aspects of the machinery of institutionalism - schools, lawyers, family. What is perhaps ironic is that most of those who have come forward to support me have been people who have known me first as a teacher or a graduate-student in

settings where they have learned about my passion and commitment towards overcoming oppression before they knew that I was a part-time mother, because until very recently - as I have already told - I have not readily admitted this about myself. And why would I? - I take little pleasure in having been socially-construed as the "bad mother."

I do take some heart in my awareness that even though I have been so apprehended and redefined by institutions, I seem also to have become unleashed. I have been incited to challenge the very terrain that the patriarchal conception of motherhood is built upon (Rich, 1976:55). Moreover, I have taken it upon myself to acquire fluency in the modes of discourse necessary to take up such a challenge. Perhaps my adversaries have themselves contributed, unknowingly I would suggest, to the destruction of the institution of motherhood that Rich tells us must occur if there is to be any possibility of individual freedom. Perhaps they, by attempting to subordinate me, have in fact enabled my unleashing. Perhaps I now become their adversary?

What is astonishing, what can give us enormous hope and belief in a future in which the lives of women and children shall be mended and rewoven by women's hands, is all that we have managed to salvage, of ourselves, for our children, even within the destructiveness of the institution: the tenderness, the passion, the trust in our instincts, the evocation of a courage we did not know we owned, the detailed apprehension of another human existence, the full realization of the cost and precariousness of life. The mother's battle for her child - with sickness, with poverty, with war, with all the forces of exploitation and callousness that cheapen human life - needs to become a common human battle, waged in love and in the passion for survival. But for this to happen, the institution of motherhood must be destroyed.

The changes required to make this possible reverberate into every part of the patriarchal system. To destroy the institution is not to abolish motherhood. It is to release the creation and sustenance of life into the same realm of decision, struggle, surprise, imagination and conscious intelligence, as any other difficult, but freely chosen work (Rich, 1976:279-80).

But there are some other things, besides, that I take heart in and do not ignore, things that comfort me by their very presence and simultaneously compel me to continue my challenge against my oppressors. There is the dangling sleeve of my son's flannel pyjamas hanging over the side of the bed in the room where I have placed my desk. There are their posters on these walls - Toronto Blue Jays, Michael Jordan, and a map of Narnia that is tacked on the ceiling over the bed, at my youngest son's request so that he can lie there at night and study it as he falls asleep. His hockey jersey hangs on the back of the door, and an old teddy bear and stuffed doll rest upon the pillow on his bed, awaiting his return. The names and phone numbers of my oldest son's friends are written on a scrap of paper that is taped to the phone-receiver, and a jumble of their computer-game discs sits on top of the hard-drive. There are many signs of their lives here. Although I miss them when they are at their other home, these signs are a constant comforting reminder that they will return again; that even when I am in the midst of my "work", I am still a mother, first, last and always, and my children are never far away.

IV. BROADENING MY HORIZON

Nevertheless, worlds remain to be explored. There is the chance of increasing clarity; the ability to say what one means and can defend, to provide good reasons for what one believes. There is the chance of intensified commitment to values. There is the chance of combatting the sense of meaninglessness and nihilism which afflicts so many - indeed of transforming the world (Greene, 1973:37).

The essence of this third chapter makes little mention of the fact that I am a teacher and initially I was somewhat dismayed about the apparent absence of the subject-position that would seem to demand the most attention in a thesis that claims to be about emancipatory pedagogical practice. My doubt was intensified by the fact that these narratives are essentially about loss. But, as Greene wrote: "Tragedy, however, discloses and challenges" (1988:23). I have come to understand that it is my textualization of these seemingly tragic moments that has enabled me to articulate and frame the questions that I have about how it is to be a teacher of young children, and how my own lived experience influences my teaching practice.

Rosenblatt puts forward the notion of "writing as transaction" (1989:163). While writing, the individual is simultaneously interacting with her or his own biography and all of the influences that have shaped and are shaping her/his lifeworld.

...writing, which is often spoken of as a solitary activity, is not simply a matter of dipping into a memory pool. Writing, we know, is always an event in time, occurring at a particular moment in the writer's biography, in particular circumstances, and under particular external and internal pressures. In short, the writer is always transacting with a personal,

social and cultural environment...the writing process must be seen as always embodying both personal and social environmental factors (Rosenblatt, 1989:163).

For me, the act of writing these narratives, this relating of parts of my autobiography, has been a process of discovering where and how I am located in relation to the world that I inhabit. Rosenblatt's work helps me to acknowledge and validate the many influences that have shaped my writing, and explain how writing about these moments has brought me to a deeper understanding of myself and the resources I have used to make sense of my own experience.

As I honour my own autobiography by relating these narratives about myself, I simultaneously honour the potential presence of the autobiographies of my students, and I demonstrate my awareness of and commitment to exploring ways for individuals to proclaim their presence, even within the daunting restrictiveness of institutional settings. To dismiss the essential centrality of self is to deny that self exists. Individuals must be present in their activity in order for them to be able to act meaningfully on the world(s) that they inhabit. I name myself as one who knows loss. Because I am so concerned about the loss of self within institutions, this naming of myself, by virtue of the narratives that describe my lived experience, helps the stranger, my readers, to understand how deeply I am connected to my own research.

Certainly, Wisteria Vines, like The Day I Brought Matthew To School With Me, casts me in the role of victim and subordinate.

The vines were cut down despite my protests, and more, I am a mother who does not live with her children. And so myself who is mother personally shatters the socially-constructed expectations that prescribe and presuppose what I should be, and do not accommodate who I, in fact, am.

My revelations relate the uniqueness of my position. I seem to be a single mother, white, educated, professional. I am all of these things: single, a mother, white, educated, a professional. But I am not a single-mother. I am, rather, a part-time mother who lives with her children on an occasional basis. The reality of my lived experience defies the possibility of slotting me into a predictable, socially-convenient construction of who and what I am. I contradict a powerful, socially-influential stereotype. My lived experience cannot be reduced to any of the prevalent arguments about what life is like for the single-mother because I do not fit the stereotype. By the very fact that I acknowledge that I am not a predictable entity, I refuse all the generalizations about my students that could become convenient abstractions, that could render the task of teaching a diverse group of individuals much less problematic and difficult by simply clumping them together into a homogeneous, uniglossial mass of middle-class suburban children.

My recognition of myself as a social/cultural/political anomaly makes it both possible and necessary for me to consider the likelihood that my individual students are no more slottable than I am; that they may not be what they seem to be; that I

cannot in any conscience justify the raising of my own disparate voice without ascribing the same right to the children who are my students. As teacher, I must initiate the search for a way for them to empower themselves.

I turn now to the site of the school, and begin to uncover some of the places and ways that individual children have become lost at school.

Chapter Four

BECOMING LOST AT SCHOOL

But children are not like a toy where you could pick it up and put it down whenever you want. Like a video game, or a tape, a music tape, you stop it wherever you want. Life is not like that (Patty, age 11, in Baxter, 1993:62-63).

We must listen to children's stories and reconstruct the meaning of schooling through their eyes and through our own, for we were members of child culture once. Stories are where we must begin--and stories are the clues which will lead us to new ways of knowing (Polakow, 1985:833).

Most young children come into the school anticipating a certain sense of being and belonging, according to their socially-acquired expectations of that site and the experiences they've already had within it. The children who became our students in the open-area already had some familiarity with school because they had all completed at least one grade. Some of them moved into our classroom and immediately felt very comfortable and secure; others took some time to assess their surroundings and find a way to fit into them. But after a month or two, there was a general atmosphere of trust and ease with each other and with the teachers. Some evidence of this lay in the fact that many of them expressed a desire to publicly relate

to their classmates what was happening in their lives away from school within our daily forum of "Sharing Time." Their choice to utilize this opportunity suggests that it is intrinsically important for children, as individuals, to seek ways to connect their lives at school to their lives at home.

"Guess what? Today is my baby's birthday! Today is, today, this day, my baby's birthday. And my cousin is coming for her birthday tonight," Tony tells us.

"Where is she coming from?" someone asks.

"Uhm..." his eyes glance around and he pounds his palm with the index finger of his other hand. "Uhm ... from Florence, I think."

"Oh, it's your aunt!" I exclaim. His mother has told me that she is expecting her sister to arrive from Italy.

"Yeah, my aunt, my aunt. My aunt is coming tonight for my baby's birthday. So that is two things for today - my aunt, and my baby's birthday the second one!" [Fieldnote: February 15, 1993].

Sharlene stands up in front of her classmates. There is little emotion on her face, but she is holding a football in her hands. She waits until the room is silent before she speaks.

"My uncle gave me this football when he was dying, and the next time I seen him he was already dead. Any questions?" [Fieldnote: January 31, 1993].

Birthdays and aunts who come from far away are occasions for happiness and celebration; illness and death demand and are characterized by seriousness. Children live real lives. The events, emotions and circumstances that they face attest to the vitality and inevitability of their human condition. They bring these moments and mementoes into the school, into the classroom. They offer them to the people that they are required to spend time with - classmates and teachers - as evidence of their

individual lived experience, as they seek to make sense of what it is that is happening in the broader context of their lives.

But what happens to them when they find themselves in the midst of school-territory that is unfamiliar and unfriendly; that does not honour the reality that each child is much more than "a" student in "a" school; which contradicts or renders useless the sense-making strategies and resources they have acquired to safely navigate their way through the landscape? Often, they become dependent on others, usually adults, to recognize the urgency of their plight, to listen - to genuinely "listen" to their voices -and then act on their behalf in meaningful and constructive ways. In this sense, children become oppressed by the institution that demands their presence. Unable to act on their own behalf, dependent on others to take action for them, they live at risk of losing themselves.

I have already related several events from my own life wherein "I" became subordinate to the dictates and agendas of institutions. It is not difficult for me to generalize my experience to the experiences of the children who are my students. But is this the point? Is it requisite for me to have had experiences that are similar to theirs in order for me to teach them? Or is more that by having told my own stories, confiding my own losses within the context of pedagogical inquiry, I am conveying my understanding that, just as I have learned that I cannot separate myself as person from myself as teacher, neither can these children's lives as students be

separated from the daily realities of their lived experiences, from who they are in place and time.

When attempting to understand the life-worlds of young children, I as adult am confronted with the task of reconstructing narratives that are drawn from a language of action, of gesture, of activity, of silence - a living text that forms the fabric of a story which I must weave for an adult audience. I am always confronted by the dual task of meaning making...there is the meaning that inheres in the thing itself, the microworld that this one unique child inhabits, and then there is the broader thematic meaning that poses a pedagogical question for all of us to critically reflect upon such a theme and act to transform such a landscape [Polakow, 1985:832].

The lived worlds of teacher and students merge in the classroom. I have chosen to participate in their worlds by the very act of becoming a teacher, and by writing about their experiences. It becomes my pedagogical imperative to seek meaningful ways of understanding their life-worlds, not in fragmented, disjointed bits but in their entirety, in order to engage in this dual task of meaning making. It is here in the midst of my own subjective experience that I seek to understand the lifeworlds of my individual students, to find the familiar and common that we share.

"...The phenomenologist is committed to showing how subjectivity and objectivity are reciprocal, constituting both person and world. Phenomenology's search for the ground of knowledge and meaning always leads to reflection on the relation of the knowing subject to the object of consciousness...For the world we feel, the world we remember, is also the world we make up. The place that is familiar can be the place where we are most lost" (Grumet, 1988, pp. 63-65).

It is discomfoting to think that the familiar place can be the place where we are most lost. Further, I question the notion

that children do, in fact, "make up" the world they live in at school. I think it is often constructed for them by others who may be very distanced from them: teachers, administrators, bureaucrats and politicians, writers of curricula. While the school; or the individual classroom; or the unique nature of the interactions between individual child and individual teacher, may be, or become, familiar, these often become sites of unfriendly action. Many of them do become quite lost within the institution, and consequently, to themselves. Therefore, as a starting point at least, it becomes "...pedagogically essential always to ask (or at least try to ask) how the child experiences the situation" (van Manen, 1991:78).

In this chapter, I am going to relate and reflect upon three separate incidents of unfriendly action as they seemed to be experienced by children who were my students. The first story is about Tony and how he was divested of his concept of himself as a learner when there was no Graduation Ceremony to mark the end of his Kindergarten year. The second story is about Cynthia and the impact on her sense of comfort in the familiar when she was moved from one class to another three weeks into her Grade Three year. Finally, I consider my own discovery, as teacher, that many of the children who were my students were experiencing exclusion and unfriendly action from their peers within the site of our own Classroom.

"I had a friend and he was playing with me and he saw his best friend and he went to play with him. And I said to my friend maybe we could all play together but he didn't listen to me" - Darryl, age 8.

I. TONY HAS TOLD ME HE NEVER "GRADULATED"

I often wonder about the assumptions that teachers make about the expectations of school and learning that children bring to school with them. Sometimes I think that we inadvertently, sometimes inappropriately, base them on our own experiences, or on what we have been led to believe about children by previous students that we have had. Sometimes, we forget to consider that each student is an individual child with his/her own set of experiences and expectations, according to their own history.

Tony came into my class in September 1992, and right from the beginning, he told me that he couldn't read or write. Over and over again, every time I tried to engage him in an activity that involved one or the other, or both, he told me very seriously that he couldn't do either.

The teacher in me believed that he could do both, that he was doing both. Many times I observed him sitting with another child in front of an open book, pouring over the print, pointing to individual words with his fingers, his eyes scanning the illustrations that would give some clues about the meaning of the text. I listened to the dialogue that took place between them: "Here's an 'e'." "No, there's two of them after the 'b'." "Look, the farmer is pulling out the beet!" "B-e-e-t," I heard him spell aloud. "Beet," they said together. This is reading.

During Journal time, he would draw elaborate pictures, and then chain letters across the bottom of the paper to describe

what the picture was about. The initial letters in his strings were phonetically appropriate ones, and occasionally the other ones approximated the sound of the word that he was trying to write. "R-a-q-t" - rocket. He had seen a rocket on T.V. Sometimes the chains were long endless lists of letters that didn't seem to represent any meaning at all. But the fact that he had written them demonstrated that he clearly understood that print conveyed meaning. Yet he continued to tell me that he couldn't learn anything because he couldn't read or write, even though he had a solid grasp of what both activities required and involved.

I constantly told him that he was learning, that he was a reader and a writer, that I could tell that he was doing both. "Look at what you wrote today," I would say. "Will you read it to me, please?" "No," he would answer. "I can't read."

We repeated this cycle together for eight months. I would tell him that he could read and write, and he would tell me that he couldn't. I would show him my proof, and still he would tell me that he couldn't do either. Then, in May, I interviewed him for my research, and I began to understand why he had this sense of himself as neither a reader nor a writer.

FISHING FOR PEARLS

"Gradulate. I never graduated," Tony says to me, his wide black six year-old eyes staring straight into my own. "Never. I din't even graduate from

kindergarten. I just moved out of my, my kindergarten. And I din'nt even have a suit. I din'nt have a hat. And I din'nt even have a paper." He pushes his lower lip out, crosses his arms and slouches heavily back against his chair.

I have been interviewing Tony, and some of my other students, as a means of gathering data for my graduate research.⁹ One of the things that I asked of each of them was to relate an incident when they felt proud.

"Proud?" he asks. "Gradulate. I never graduated...I din'nt even have a paper."

I have a good sense that Tony understands what is meant by proud if only because he has chosen to respond to my question by telling me about a time that his pride seemed to be threatened by not having the opportunity to participate in a ceremony that would have marked his passage from kindergarten to Grade One. I wonder if he has a friend or maybe a cousin who attended a different school, one where the teacher might have chosen to

⁹. When I first began my research, my intent was to attempt to come to some understanding of children's perceptions of themselves, in order for me to explore the extent to which my own teaching practice was connected to the realities of their daily lived experiences. While the nature of my study has since shifted somewhat from the original intent, it seems necessary to explain why I asked Tony to tell me about a time that he felt proud. One of the questions that I had asked the children was about moments in their lives when they had felt particular emotions (happy, sad, angry, proud, frightened, shy/embarrassed). I was trying to construct questions that I thought would be conceptually accessible to these young children and the range of developmental modes of discourse that they individually represented. See Appendix B for a complete list of questions.

celebrate the end of kindergarten by having tasselled-flatboard graduation caps and certificates to show the children that they were ready to move up the institutional ladder. I also know that over the past few weeks, we have been addressing the issue of pride and "doing one's best" in our classroom discussions. This topic has arisen as a result of teachers' and parents' school-wide concern that our students seem not to have any sense of ownership or pride in their domain, as has become evident through an increasing number of acts of vandalism at our school.¹⁰ But I am not focused on that now. I am concentrating on Tony as I seek ways to reassure him that even if he didn't "gradulate" he still deserves to be in Grade One. Of course, I am assuming that he feels no right to be there. Perhaps I am misconstruing the intent of Tony's words? Perhaps I am being more alarmist than is necessary?

"You know," I say, "not all kindergartens do that.

You might not get an actual suit and hat and paper until you finish high school."

This is not really what I want to say to him. How can I expect him to feel comforted at the possibility of an event that may or may not occur, and even if it does, is still so far away - almost twelve years away, twice his present age! Why do I not just tell him that he has a right to be in Grade One? Perhaps I am not yet

¹⁰. This concern was raised by most of the teachers on staff and a number of parents, when we participated together in a Professional Development Day to set our school goals for the next school year.

certain that this is what he is implying?.

"High school," he repeats after me, looking dubious. "Or your school?" he sounds hopeful. I am surprised that he calls this school "mine," and yet his response suggests that he perceives that it is the teachers, or at least me, who clearly own and run this school that he attends. I try again.

"Well, they don't really do that at this school," I explain, meaning that even at the end of Grade Seven, he will probably not get the hat and suit and piece of paper.

"They don't?" he asks, raising his eyebrows, as though he doesn't believe me, or maybe doesn't want to.

"No, not until you get to the end of Grade Twelve," I tell him.

And even then, I wonder, will this be the case? I'm very distanced from high schools and I really don't know what they do to mark the end of students' passage through the years of public schooling. But it is so far away from him now, I tell myself, that does it really matter if I am not quite right in my suggestions? I am trying to console and assure him, but how do I justify my attempt to appease him when, in fact, I may be misleading him?

"High school," he mutters, staring out the window as he seems to digest and try to make sense of the time-frame I've alluded to. "Grade Twelve...Thirteen?"

Is there a Grade Thirteen?" he asks, as though even waiting for one more year is too much to ask of him.

"No," I tell him, "There's a Grade Twelve. And when you finish Grade Twelve, then you get the piece of paper, you might even get a suit and a hat."

"You *will* get a hat," he tells me in no uncertain terms, looking directly into my eyes.

The six-year-old is setting the record absolutely straight for the thirty-six year-old teacher sitting across the table from him. There is a sense of finality in his voice. I know that he believes this. I do not know if it will really happen. But he is only six years old, and his graduation from high school is many years away. By that time, I may not even be a memory for Tony. There is a good chance that there will be no trace of me at all in the history of himself that he carries with him, through the years of schooling that will finally culminate in his passing out of the doors of the institution of schooling. Even so, I am feeling somewhat rankled and uncomfortable about his fixation on this lack of ceremony, his need to have his achievement and progress marked by some "pomp and circumstance" that would assure him he has moved to a place that he truly deserves to be. I am also feeling somewhat alarmed that he may not feel a sense of belonging here. How can it be that by May, nine months into the school-year, I am uncertain about whether or not he truly understands that he deserves to be here? More importantly, why is he apparently feeling uncertain about whether

or not he deserves to be here?

"But, Tony," I say, "It doesn't mean that you didn't learn a lot in kindergarten."

"I learned, I learned," he says and sighs. "All we do is play, play, play in kindergarten. We just singed songs, play and learn the alphabet." He looks a bit disgusted.

"That's something that's helped you with your reading and writing this year, hasn't it?" I ask.

I am curious and concerned about his sense of himself as a learner. He came into my class in September as such an impulsive, leaping bundle of child. I delighted in him from day one. He was so impetuous, so alive, so darting from thing to thing, always running up to me and grabbing me by the hand to drag me across the carpeted floor and show me what he had just built or drawn. He has seemed to be so comfortable, so at ease with himself, and so able to indulge himself in the pleasure of the moment. I knew he was learning. He had become an oral story-teller, and brought us new stories almost everyday that delighted us with their elements of fantasy and their revelations of the sense of enthusiasm and adventure that he seemed to carry into so many aspects of his life.

Tony is running as fast as he can round the pillar in the center of the classroom, roaring like a diesel truck.

"Why are you so excited?" I ask him.

"I'm going to fish for pearls in the water. I heard it on TV. They're all kinds of colours - pink, yellow, red, purple, blue, dark green, black. They make necklaces, rings and hats with pearls, and games,

houses like money. I'm going fishing for pearls everyday except winter, and I'll still fish for pearls, I will!" [Fieldnote: April 1992].

Fishing for pearls!...how many times after hearing this story did Cindi and I utilize this metaphor as we talked together about the institutional barriers we were confronting personally and professionally, and the blockades that were set in our way as we traversed our common and separate unfamiliar territory. I cannot count them. I just remember how we would laugh together that, like Tony, we too were fishing for pearls!

And he was catching pearls! The towers he constructed with blocks became higher and more complex; the chains of letters that he strung together became longer and longer. After months of insisting to me that he could not read or write - even though he was clearly doing both - he had begun to read his stories to me from these strings of letters. And he finally told me that he had read a storybook by himself.

"You're just racing up the learning stairs!" I tell him, smiling, hoping to reassure him. He is right with me.

"And don't you remember, and don't you remember,"

" The "learning stairs" is a metaphor that we have used in our classroom, adopted from another teacher that Cindi did one of her student-teaching practicums with. Of course, "to go up the learning stairs" means that children are making progress, tangible progress that they are aware of, or if not, we can tell them about something specific that we've seen them do that shows the progress they are making, that they've taken another step up the stairs. It is a way to make their learning concrete and apparent to them. In my experience, primary-aged children have found this a meaningful way to make sense of their progress, and understand that they are, indeed, learning.

he chants in a sing-song voice. " 'It was a nice sunny day.' I read that story. I read it all. I went up the learning stairs!"

"You did! You went up the learning stairs." I reply, and we laugh together.

Tony's experiences are evidence of the frightening reality that by a mere six years of age, a child has already felt the negative impact of institutionalization. Only in Grade One, and already apparently feeling that he has no right to be there simply because he "din't have a suit, or a hat, or a piece of paper," when he finished kindergarten. I wonder, very seriously, if these trappings, or the lack thereof, could explain why he was so insistent about not being able to read or write. What expectations had been imposed upon him about what would mark the transition between kindergarten and Grade One? This absence of ceremony seemed to interfere with the possibility of recognizing for himself that he was a reader and a writer.

In "Operating On A Child's Heart", Smith relates the poignant story of his son's stay in a hospital, and accounts for how the child attempts to make sense of the experience. He writes:

The child comes home with a new lease on life. Through the operation he has been given the chance of a normal life span. For him, however, there are more immediate things to be concerned with. There are the souvenirs of the hospital to be remembered. He must take home the identification band he wore on his wrist, and the gauze hair covering which came from the operating room. These mementos of hospital life take precedence over

the expensive gifts from well-wishing friends....even the toys...he has brought from home to occupy himself during his stay in the hospital...when it is time for the child to leave the hospital, he takes home the only things that make sense to him--the wrist band and the gauze hair covering (1989:157).

For Tony, though, it is not the memories of kindergarten life that he recalls that are significant. Rather, significance lies in the things that he did not receive that he had expected and anticipated. By not receiving them, he believed he was not worthy of them. He did not deserve to be in Grade One. He already knew that he could not do the reading and writing that his peers were doing. After all, he "din't even graduate."

Learning is a continuum. Each individual learner - student and teacher, alike - can only work with and build upon the resources they have. We cannot build our learning on what we do not know. We must know, deeply and thoroughly for ourselves, before we can confidently move ourselves forward into unfamiliar territory. Perhaps for some people - for Tony - such knowing requires the validation that comes with the trappings of ceremonies. Apparently, he did not feel entitled to be able to read or write in Grade One because he did not take part in such a ceremony. In this sense, he becomes a victim of unfriendly action. But there is also an element of hope that is contextualized within his closing comment to me. He has not yet lost the ability to utilize his own intentional activity as a means of making sense of where he stands within his life at school, although he has needed me to be a mediator for him between his actual experience and what he had expected to happen.

"And don't you remember, and don't you remember," he chants in a sing-song voice. " 'It was a nice sunny day.' I read that story. I read it all. I went up the learning stairs!"

"You did!" I replied, and we laughed together...Fishing for pearls.

II. TRAVERSING UNFAMILIAR TERRITORY

*Piglet sidled up to Pooh from behind.
 "Pooh?" he whispered.
 "Yes, Piglet?"
 "Nothing," said Piglet, taking Pooh's paw.
 "I just wanted to be sure of you."
 -A.A. Milne*

"To be sure of you." Such evocative and trusting words that engage both speaker and listener in the mutuality of their shared relationship. Piglet has certainly learned, time and time again, nestled as he is within the pages of A.A. Milne's storybooks, that he can most certainly be sure of Pooh, no matter what the trough. Moreover, the gesture of Piglet taking Pooh's paw embodies and intensifies the depth of trust he holds in his friend. But what of the rest of us who live, not in a storybook, but in the real world of human action and interaction?

Our Primary staff began the 1992-93 school year with a Friendship theme. We made this decision together the previous June, in an effort to avoid what had been a recurring and troubling situation. Every September, once the dust had fallen and all the heads had been counted, when the School Board finally

determined how many teachers our school was entitled to according to the size of our student population, we have had to reorganize our classes. Politics aside, the fact remains that numerous children have found themselves switching classes after two or three weeks of school. For us, as teachers, it has been dismaying and disheartening to observe the sadness, apprehension, and inevitable sense of rejection that accompanies being moved.

We determined this year that even if we could not avoid a reorganization, we would at least try to ease it for our students. We felt that if we were all teaching the same theme and if we all participated together in some theme-related activities, we would be providing an opportunity for our students to meet all of the teachers and students outside of their own classes, thereby easing the potential difficulty of these enforced moves for the children who would experience them.

"Pedagogical action mediates the influence of the world...To teach is to influence the influences. The teacher uses the influence of the world pedagogically as a resource for tactfully influencing the child"
(van Manen, 1991:80).

We chose the theme of Friendship because it seemed to have great potential for accommodating our intent toward tactful influence. Perhaps we could minimize the inevitable distress and discomfiture that accompanies these transitions, this shifting of children out of familiar environments, into unfamiliar territory. Beyond being moved out of a place where they belonged - if only according to the official computer-printed class-lists that hang on the front door on the first day of school - upon entrance into

the new classroom, they had to explore the new site, not as inhabitants but as newcomers, and try to find a place for themselves within it. In this way, children become lost in territory that they are required to inhabit; that purports to be safe, and seemingly promises to nurture them and foster their growth as learners; which is sanctioned and supported by their caretakers - parents and teachers alike. But reliability and predictability are compromised. Trust and security are sabotaged. Children are denied a familiar and comforting place. They become lost at school, yet they have no choice but to be there.

I GAVE CYNTHIA AWAY

I had to give away one Grade Three student, in addition to a couple each of Ones and Twos. For a number of reasons, I had decided that Cynthia would be the Grade Three student who would move. I did worry about the effect of my decision on Cynthia, for she was new to our school, and seemed to be making friends in my class. I didn't want to disrupt the sense of belonging that she already seemed to have. But all my other Threes, I'd had them all for two years already. They were my first students at this school, and we have grown so much together, them nurturing me as much as I have them. How could I give any of them away? And most of their parents had requested that their children stay with me for another year. I went through the list over and over again, imagining what my classroom would be like without any of

them, but I was unable to resolve my dilemma. Besides, I justified to myself, I had been tracking them in my research and I really couldn't afford to do without any one of them. I had been counting on having each one of them for another year. Perhaps I was being selfish...it is possible that one or more of them would have been very happy, even proud, to be moved up to the older class.

As for Cynthia, I didn't want to let her go either, but I did think she would be alright. Besides, I knew that her new teacher was receiving some "difficult" students from other teachers, and I felt that Cynthia's quiet and self-directed nature would "ease the load" as it were. We'd had such a brief history together that I did not think that she would miss us much. I walked her to the door of her new classroom and introduced her to some of the Grade Four girls who were my students last year, knowing they would invite her into their games at recess and lunch if I asked them to. She was gentle and kind and accommodating, and I thought she would fit in well wherever she went.

Cynthia came to visit me two, three and four times a day everyday for the first two weeks after I gave her away to another teacher. She even had her father bring in her dog for me to see, a mottled labrador-retriever cross, and very gentle. Her father and I laughed together that the dog had inherited Cynthia's disposition! Then she abruptly stopped coming to visit me. I assumed that she was doing well where she was. I did not seek

her out.

Two months later, I was in the staffroom at lunch-time when her new teacher, the one I gave Cynthia to, told me how sullen and disruptive she was, that she was an unmotivated and disinterested student, and had even spoken back on a couple of occasions. I was surprised and dismayed. I felt a deep sadness and concern for Cynthia, and I reproached myself for making a decision that was more in my interests than hers. I was angry at this teacher for letting her become unhappy. I blamed it on the fact that her new class had not participated in our Friendship activities because they were for primary students, and her new class was comprised mainly of intermediate students. But, of course, I know that such categories are just labels created by the institution to expedite its agenda, and could not be used to account for Cynthia's apparent alienation from her new teacher and peers. Silently to myself I said to her new teacher "You have brought this misery on yourself, but you are not half so unhappy as Cynthia. Have you thought of that?" Professional ethics prevented me from speaking out loud in such a public forum. But what is ethical about professional action that interferes with the well-being and happiness of our students? Have we lost all sense of our moral imperative to treat our students kindly, as we ourselves would hope to be treated? How much less guilty was I? [Fieldnote, November 3, 1992].

Cynthia's story is evidence that our benevolent intent did not accommodate her needs. The teacher, me, who she seemed to be

sure of - an assumption I make based on her frequent visits to me even after I "gave her away" and on her apparent change in attitude upon moving to her new classroom - rejected her and sent her to an unfamiliar place. What energy she must have already expended on finding comfort in the new territory which was my classroom, to seem so defeated in her new surroundings! But I did not honour or value her pursuit of belonging, despite the fact that I had conveyed to her that she could be sure of me in the way that I welcomed her into my classroom when she arrived there the first day. I can excuse myself, if I must, by explaining that I did not know her well enough to have a sense of the challenge this pursuit of belonging may have been to her. Nonetheless, Cynthia became a victim of institutional subordination, and now it seemed she was responding in kind - being unfriendly to her teacher, her peers and, I would suggest, to herself. She stopped coming to visit me, of her own accord, I think. I always tried to make her feel welcome on these visits back. But seeing another child in her desk, another's coat on her hook, I suspect she recognized this place was no longer hers. Now I ask myself, how can we expect children such as Cynthia to feel safe and secure, to be sure of us, when we so violate their sense of being and belonging?

Cynthia, through the process of reorganization, was rendered voiceless and was stripped of her potential to find and create her own reality together with other people. And I, as the one who seized ownership of her history, become a conspirator in the

perpetration of pedagogical and humanistic insensitivity. Perhaps there is a place here for me to argue that such pessimistic retrospection creates no useful dialogue. But, how can I, in any conscience, ask that others heed and honour my own lifeworld when I have been so easily dismissive of the lifeworld of Cynthia?

There is the potential to do much damage in this job. I am sometimes overwhelmed by the power of teachers to influence the lives of their young students, and consequently, their families. We can nurture and nourish the children who are our students by the ways that we choose to engage with them. Or, we can cut short any possibility of nurturing by the very act of crossing their names off our class-lists and rewriting them onto another teacher's. I may not be able to undo the harm that was incurred upon Cynthia, and which I contributed to, but at least I do not hold myself in a static position. I learn from these experiences, from these losses as well as the positive and enriching moments, if only by the fact that I do reflect back upon them and try to determine why things happened the way they did.

It is interesting to me, considering what I wrote about my intuition informing my work in Chapter Three, that this was perhaps a situation where I did not listen very carefully to myself and ignored the sense of unease I felt when I decided to give her away. Unable to recoup what Cynthia lost, and having reflected back to try to make sense of the events and the

influence of my actions, now I can only move forward. I can only tell myself to listen more carefully to my instinctive sense of how I should act; to consider more deeply the needs of those who will experience the consequences of my action; to try to find ways to prevent children from ever having to become lost to themselves. This may seem a naive and grandiose objective, given the strength and constraints of the institution that I work within. But I became lost within imposing institutions and was able to find myself again. Are children any less entitled than me? And as an adult who knows oppression and who has chosen to become a teacher, am I not obligated to act on their behalf? How can I, in any conscience, decry my own oppression and then ignore theirs?

III. DECONSTRUCTING FRIENDSHIP IN MY CLASSROOM

We...become anthropologists of childhood, investigating the phenomenology of that life project in order to derive insight into the meaning structures of that life-world and to be transformed by our understanding of the experience; for understanding the child from the perspective of his [sic] world is to hold the view that, despite biological and developmental determinants, the growing child is an intentional actor constructing a life project with consciousness, that becoming in the world involves a dynamic self-representation, that the child too, is a historical being, a maker of history, a meaning-maker involved in a praxis upon the world (Polakow, 1982:35-6).

The notion of "a friend" is a complex one. Friendship in its many countenances and possibilities is a universal theme, which endures by the very fact that we are humans and, as such, are necessarily social beings. The making of friends is of

significant and enduring importance in the primary classroom, as elsewhere. Having friends offers a sense of belonging and comfort that enables children to participate in safe, optimally nurturing interactions with their peers. Unfriendly action between children can take many forms: being rejected, teased, insulted, or contending with a friend insulting one's other friends.

"My friend insults my other friends. I feel like hitting him but I do my best to keep it inside. If I did [hit him] I would start a fight and get into trouble and break our friendship." Greg - age 8

Friendships can be broken, shattered, lost. Greg is put at risk, and is challenged to exercise self-control. Not only would he get in trouble if he expressed his anger physically, but such anger would jeopardize his friendship with the person who is casting the insults. The risk of rejection challenged his loyalty to his other friend.

As a teacher who works with young children, I have sometimes been surprised at the unfaltering trust that young children hold for those who have shown them that "you can't be sure of me."

"Me and my friend were talking and I said I like Brad and my friend got up and walked away" - Seth, age 8.

Seth's friendship is put at risk when he expresses his feelings for another child who he knows and likes. Yet he continues to call the child who walked away from him, his friend. How disarming and complex are these brief interactions! Seth's friend, like Darryl's, demonstrates the power that peers may hold in determining another child's place and sense of belonging.

Over the years, I have spent countless hours watching young children negotiating friendships with their peers, as they attempt to find their place within the social context of their class and school. Their approaches are, of course, as unique and varied as are the individuals themselves. By virtue of belonging together in the community that is our classroom, we must find ways of "being" together that enable each individual to feel safe and secure, necessary conditions for the risk-taking that learning requires. For the young child, a sense of belonging in this community that is imposed upon them can be constituted by having friends.

"Someone tripped me and right away I knew she didn't like me and my feelings were hurt. And she laughed at me. I felt like crying. I was embarrassed and I felt clumsy but I knew I wasn't. She played with my friend and I had no one to play with." Sherry - age 8.

I cannot insist that they be "friends" with each other. Friendship is entered into upon mutual agreement of those who negotiate the unique nature and terms of the relationship. It cannot be mandated by the teacher. But I can, and do, endeavour to foster and encourage their understanding that there are particular ways of treating people that are appropriate, considerate and respectful.

"Bonnie is my friend and people make fun of her. And lots of people make fun of me and I don't feel right about that. That is mean." Lisa - age 7

I tell them explicitly that they don't have to be everyone's friend - but that they do have to treat people with respect. "Kindly" is the word I use.

"Are you treating her kindly?" I ask Sherry, Karen and Bonnie, as Lisa stands sobbing in front of me. They have excluded her from the playhouse, even though there are only three people in it, and the rule is that there can be four. So two different things have been violated: the sanctity of classroom rules, and her sense of belonging with her friends. [Fieldnote, Oct. 16, 1992].

In keeping with our Primary theme of Friendship, although the reorganization had already taken place, I had sought out a number of stories about friends. My pedagogical intent had moved beyond the original motive to ease the transition for children who would be moved, and had extended into the realm of daily interactions between my students. We had been reading these stories together, and the children had been responding through a variety of mediums about qualities and behaviours that characterized how friends treat each other. As with everything else in my practice, I was trying to connect their learning experiences about relationships to their lived experiences, believing as I do that learning must be purposeful and relevant to the contexts of their lives. But, while our learning activities seemed to have some merit within the intent of the theme, and the children had been generally enthusiastic and committed to their engagement in them, nothing had yet been read, written or said that seemed to be particularly compelling or gripping for anyone. Their responses seemed to be somewhat patent, and I wondered if they were merely superficial rhetoric - understanding the intent of the activity and knowing what the appropriate answers were.

Then I found a book called The Unfriendly Book by Charlotte

Zolotow (1975). When I read it, my first reaction was that it was impermissible. This story was about being mean to people! In bold and brazen, black and white text, Zolotow's main character hurled insults, slander and scorn - all the unspeakable utterances that I was hearing daily and attempting to discourage.

"Last year when we had to do writing workshop and we had to go in the little groups, well this person made fun of this person's face and I think that person must have felt bad." - Derek, age 7

Then I made the connection - if I was hearing them daily, they were being spoken daily. Although they generally interacted in harmonious ways, the dialogue of this story was part of the social vernacular of these children. This was their reality. If it seemed unspeakable and impermissible - well, so it was. But for me to ignore its occurrence was just as impermissible, and would be a denial of the integrity of all of their interactions as genuine and human ones.

I am more aware of the voices of exclusion in the classroom. "You can't play," suddenly seems too overbearing and harsh, resounding like a slap from wall to wall. How casually one child determines the fate of another (Paley, 1992:3).

Experiencing exclusion within the site of the school - or anywhere - is disarming and frightening activity. But the notions of respect and consideration, the idea of "treating them kindly" can be highly abstract, and it is sometimes difficult to convey to children just what I mean by them. According to different domestic and cultural environments, there are many possible connotations and interpretations, and as many ways for individuals to convey them. Here was an opportunity to connect

this story and its characters to these children's own lived experiences, to contextualize my insistence that they "treat each other kindly," by having them reflect upon a time that they were themselves treated unkindly.

After we read the story together, I asked them to reflect upon a time when someone had treated them in an unfriendly way, and then write or draw about their experience.¹²

"Once my friend kept saying mean things about my other friend, and wasn't my friend then but he is now. And once I was mean to a friend of mine and he took awhile to forgive me but now we are friends." Brad - age 8

"Once I had a friend, I was playing Nintendo and my friend came downstairs and saw me playing it and booted me out and would you like that?" Troy - age 7

"Sometimes people say stupid to me and I don't like some people say stupid to me and it hurt my feeling when they say stupid." Mary - age 7

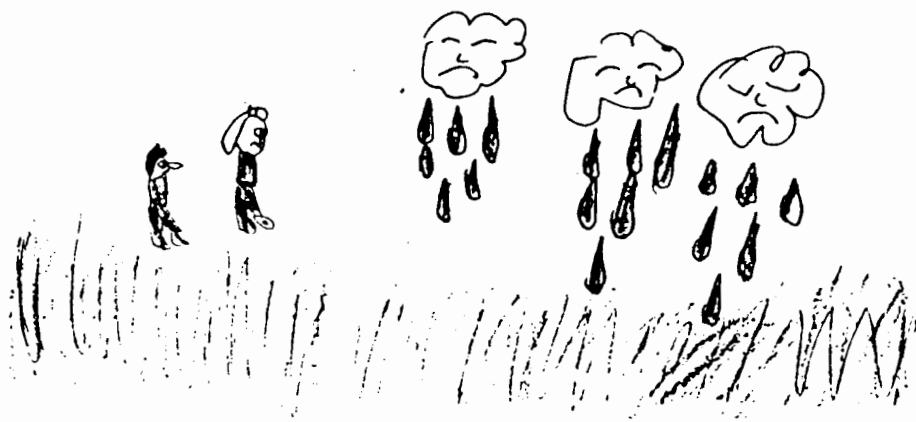
The responses that emerged were powerful, heartfelt and moving. The drawings that are exhibited in Figure 1 - the tear-ridden face of the child who is being punched by another child who is smiling; the crying clouds that hang over the head of the little girl who is feeling sad over the betrayal of her friend - demonstrate and reveal the powerful influence of peer relationships on the place of belonging that young children seek to find. They also reveal a semblance of the destructiveness to self that can occur when human interactions interrupt or

¹². All of the quotes from children in Section III of this chapter are taken from their written responses to The Unfriendly Book, unless they are designated as fieldnotes in parentheses.



"Punch" - Kyle, age 5

MAGIN IS MY FRAD AND PYOPLE.
MAXE FAN OF HOR



"Meghan is my friend and people make fun of her." -- Vivian, age 6.

Figure 1: Children's Samples of Unfriendly Action

The Boy who chride.

Once upon a time there
 was a young boy. His
 name was gonitin he is a
 navermind lets contin you.
 With the store o.k. war
 was i o yes he wate to
 school he was cold mocicin
 becaus. He olwas war mocien's
 but nown now his sicut hat
 he mit not look nic but.
 He nos that it's wot's
 insid that cots, tats
 wat he nos that's wot he nos
 all rite

The Boy Who Tried

Once upon a time there was a young boy. His name was Jonathan. He is a...never mind, let's continue with the story. Okay, where was I? Oh yes, he went to school. He was called Moccasin because he always wore moccasins. But no one knew his secret, that he might not look nice, but he knows that it's what inside that counts. That's what he knows. That's what he knows alright.

Figure 2: Story written by an eight-year old child after reading The Unfriendly Book.

compromise the expectations for social acceptance that young children come to school with.

"The Boy Who Chride" - in Figure 2 - provides an example of how children may, whether directed to or not, attempt to connect their lived experience within the school-at-large, to what they are learning in their own class. Sandy was not "told" to write this story. He took it upon himself to textualize for outsiders just how it looks from the inside, just what he saw from his unique vantage point. Sandy, so often considered to be an "unfriendly" child - by teachers, students and parents as they experienced and contended with his aggressive, often violent behaviour - shows us the discrepancy that, I think, so often exists between how we interpret another's actions, and what his/her actual intent was. It seems to me that Sandy was very aware of how others perceived him. After all, he wrote "he might not look nice." But it also seems to me that he utilized this opportunity to speak, to write, on his own behalf: "he knows that it's what inside that counts...that's what he knows alright." His capacity for introspection disarms me, and I find myself wondering once again how my presumptions about what children may do and know might actually inhibit their abilities to do and to know for themselves. I must confess that I was taken aback by Sandy's story. I had no idea that he had such a strong sense of how he was acting upon, and being acted upon, by the world that he inhabited. I was no less surprised by the responses that other students made to The Unfriendly Book,

although no other child chose to do any writing in response to this story other than the assignment that I had imposed.

I was particularly struck in this instance by the intensity of their engagement in their story-telling. Not one child came up to me to say that they couldn't think of anything to write about. I have seldom had this experience. Further, their writing and drawings revealed a depth of understanding and sensitivity regarding the complexities of being treated unkindly, or treating someone else unkindly, that I had not anticipated. Rejection, alienation, insults, seeking forgiveness - all are parts of the composite textures of their lives.

It is not my intent to represent the interactions between these children as being exclusively or even predominantly negative or destructive. Nor would this be an accurate representation. In fact, this was one of the most harmonious and mutually-supportive groups of children that I have ever taught, which only heightens my curiosity and concern about the dissonant moments. Probably I should only be curious and not concerned at all. Perhaps I should be more concerned if there was never an outburst, an insult, an expression of anger or sadness at some perceived injustice. Would such an eventuality not suggest that these children had become victims of the institution to the extent that they would suppress all their human inclinations and reactions by engaging only in what they perceived to be appropriate behaviours according to the dictate of the institution? As adults, teachers become concerned and annoyed by

disruptive behaviour because it pulls us away from our prescribed task of "teaching" and insists that we deal with "this problem" before we can get on with our "real job." But "this problem" is part of our "real job", and indeed these problems only emphasize and totalize teaching as an essentially human engagement.

When children demonstrate their dislike of someone, or express hurt feelings, or engage in some other form of action that I have construed as unfriendly, they are asserting themselves against obstacles and challenges that compromise their right to be who they are. The passion and emotion that incites or results from these threats to their sense of belonging are evidence that they are still alive within themselves; that they do have some sense of what injustice is, and have not yet lost their potential to challenge it. Those who cast insults, who hit and punch, who try to control their peers by saying "you can't play here," have learned somewhere, perhaps at school or at daycare, perhaps at home, that this is an effective way to claim some space as their own. Often it is one of their last resorts, but nonetheless, it is a way they have learned to use to make sense of their experience, to try to find a place of belonging even though, according to our adult sensibilities, their actions seem to subvert the very thing that they are seeking. Still, I am always more concerned about the passive, voiceless children who sit meekly aside from group activity, awaiting the dictate of the teacher, than I am about the visibly angry children who insult, tease and scorn. At least, they have not given up the

struggle to raise their voices. While their voices may be dissonant, they simultaneously resonate with life and the possibility of hope.

Somehow in each fantasy is a lesson that promises to lead me to questions and commentary, allowing me to glimpse the universal themes that bind together the individual urgencies...(to) travel beneath the surface to where the living takes place (Paley, 1990:4-5).

How then, do I act? The challenge that I pose reflects what I perceive to be an abiding and fundamental issue that has continually perplexed me as I have sought to clarify for myself just what is the particular stance that I may take as teacher. That is, at what point do I intervene in the process of children's daily lives? Having assumed my stance as teacher, and having constructed myself as an empathetic and caring person - and one who is also quite prepared to admit that my own actions have been unfriendly on more than one occasion - I cannot turn my back on any of the unkind interactions that I witness or learn about. For then I would become the oppressor by the fact of my indifference or denial. It becomes my pedagogical and moral imperative to confront and attempt to resolve these disruptive incidents, to seek ways to lead the children to an understanding that there are alternative ways to cope with the injustices that they perceive. I do not mean that I should stand up in front of the class and give out advice or ultimatums, or take the disruptors aside to give them stern lectures and impose punishments for their actions, according to what I perceive to be the severity of their "crime."

What I can do, what I must do, what I did do when I solicited their writing about a time that they had been treated in an unfriendly way, is to lead them to awareness: awareness that they have a right to themselves, to be themselves, to assert themselves, to honour both their need and their entitlement to find a place of belonging...but that as they make choices about how to act for themselves, they must simultaneously attempt to do so without compromising the rights of others to these same entitlements. This is no small task for any of us. It can be an exceedingly complex and arduous undertaking in the primary classroom because children are learning, perhaps for the first time, that the values that inhere in the school, in the classroom according to the individual teacher who is the dominant architect of the landscape, may not coincide with the values that have been acquired through home-life and other places where children have already spent a significant portion of their lives - daycares, babysitters' homes, pre-schools.

School is not a place that lies somewhere between home and the real world, although it is often construed as such. Our rhetoric towards school being a place that prepares children for participation in the larger social order is an inadequate position for us, as educators, to take. It dismisses the reality that real life does occur in schools. I am deeply concerned about this orientation towards "preparing", rather than honouring and acknowledging the nature of the lifeworlds that individuals create and find within the context of the school. This stance

exemplifies an attitude of disdain and disregard for the critical and significant experiences that occur on a daily basis in the lives of the children who become our students.

My words may seem harsh and accusatory, like Paley's "slap resounding from wall to wall." But as she raises her concern about the voices of exclusion, so do I raise my concern that to dishonour or belittle the significance of the school in the lifeworlds of young children is to inhibit their potential to act on their own behalf. It excludes the potential of the classroom as a critical and significant forum where children may raise their own voices and engage in personally meaningful and purposeful action upon their individual and collective worlds; where they may challenge the institutionally-constructed idea of what a "good student" is and does without due attention to the individuals who vitally and viscerally embody this role.

IV. SEEKING ENABLING TERRITORY

It's not beauty to abruptly halt the growth of a young mind and to overlay it with the frame of an imposed culture (Ashton-Warner, 1963:34).

Throughout this thesis, I have explored the dialectical relationship between who I am as woman who is mother who is teacher. The intent of my reflections has been to reveal the inherent and inseparable interconnectedness of the many facets of my lifeworld. This is not a privilege granted to person who is teacher. It is a reality that must be honoured and acted upon by teachers so that our classrooms become sites where young children can pursue their learning about themselves, each other, and the

world around them, safely embedded in, but not bound by, the diverse realities of their own lifeworlds. I have sought a vantage point on my own life and on theirs that enables me to perceive with greater clarity and acuity what the particular nature of my role as teacher, which encompasses the curriculum that I provide, may be. Moreover, I have endeavoured to show that I am not so concerned with "preparing" as I am with affording possibilities for them to engage in their own constructive meaning-making within the context of who they are in place and time.

I have constituted the stories of Tony, Cynthia, and the writings that I solicited from the children who were my students, as evidence of institutional oppression. By recognizing their oppression, reflecting upon it, seeking to understand it and reveal the injustices that are inherent within it, I have shown that I am concerned with finding ways to create a pedagogical practice, in concert with my students, that enables them to be less concerned with becoming a prescribed, definitive sort of a learner, and more concerned with being who they are in the here and now. Here is the beginning of learning. Here are the first murmurings of their voices within the site we call school. Here begin our individual and collective journeys towards discovering ourselves and each other, our creating of enabling knowledge within our unique life-worlds, individually and together with those with whom we share this space. Here is the beginning of possibility.

Chapter Five

EMBRACING HISTORY, MOVING TOWARDS POSSIBILITY

Though I tell myself that I could feel for such a loss, and though I am not a stranger to regret or guilt, I have also come to believe that such a mourning need not forever dominate a life, that we can mourn our losses, embrace the history that in fact is ours, explore its surfaces and depths, make amends where such is appropriate, forgive ourselves, and step keenly out of mourning into a present filled with memory and doing, with being and possibility, with repose and thought and liveliness, with silence, with laughter, with love, with talk (Adan: 1991:233).

When I began to do my research, my intent was to understand how young children utilized narrative as a means of making sense of their lived experiences. But as I continually found myself writing about myself, my original interest became secondary to my desire to understand why it was so essential for me to narrate my own lived experience. Although I have often written about children, I have figured centrally in all of my stories. I stand at the center of my work.

Perhaps I have placed myself at the center of my work because doing so enables me to assume a position where I can insist on my presence being heard and felt, if only by myself when I look at these finished pages. They are concrete and

tangible. These pages hold a good part of my living. I am embodied in the words upon them. For me, they are proof that even though I did disappear for awhile, I have re-emerged and have become visible and voiced again. By placing myself at the center of my work, I have made myself worthy of being asked.

Certainly, the process of relating particular events from my life has enabled me to understand more clearly the circumstances of my oppression and loss. An underlying theme that recurs throughout this thesis is "not being asked." I was not asked why I brought Matthew to school with me; I was not asked if I wanted the vines cut down; I was not asked about my children being moved, nor ever was I asked if I wanted to be a part-time mother. Cynthia was not asked if she wanted to change classrooms; Sonia was not asked if she wanted to leave her home; my children were not asked who they wanted to live with.

"Not being asked" is a two-fold denial of the individual's rights and freedoms. First, it suggests a voicelessness, a distinct lack of power over one's own circumstances and choices. Secondly, "not being asked" also insists quite emphatically that the individual is not worthy of being spoken to. Or, to put it another way, the individual does not exist, disappears, is made invisible even within the midst of crucial circumstances and decisions that may permanently alter the course of her/his life.

The notion of centrality becomes problematic within the context of emancipatory pedagogy. Lather writes: "For researchers with emancipatory aspirations, doing empirical work

offers a powerful opportunity for praxis to the extent that it enables people to change by encouraging self-reflection and a deeper understanding of their particular situations" (1991:56). The question arises, who is it that I am attempting to emancipate? myself? or the children who are my students? The answer becomes "both." I have already explained how narrating stories from my own life has enabled me to emancipate myself, to insist on my presence being heard and felt. As for the children, the decisions that I have had to make about whose stories I would tell have been risky and complex. By not telling some of them, I may be contributing to and extending the silence that has been imposed on certain children that I have come to know very well. But I could not tell them all. I had to make choices, and I know that I chose the stories that moved my own heart, that spoke to my own experience, and I am very aware of the biases that I brought to my selections. I do not think that this is a flaw or a fault, so much as it is a recognition of how my personal experience has influenced who I have become as teacher and researcher. I wrote the stories of Tony and Sonia and Cynthia because their lived experiences were in many ways, parallel to my own, and helped me to illuminate and broaden the boundaries of my inquiry. I do not think that I used them, so much as I acted upon what I understood about them to clarify and magnify my objections to institutional oppression. I had lost my own voice; I saw that these children had lost their voices; and I became intensely curious about why, as a teacher, I was so compelled to

explore as deeply as possible the circumstances and conditions of their losses, and the consequences for them of their voicelessness.

Having posed the question "Who am I attempting to emancipate, myself or the children?" and having answered "both", I feel compelled to assert that such an answer raises further questions. How does arriving at a deeper understanding of my own situation enable me to engage in a praxis of emancipatory pedagogy for the children who are my students, if it does at all? I believe that we must be very cautious about assuming any reciprocal relationship between what we have learned for ourselves and what we have learned for the children who are in our care. Although I may have found a way, through this writing, to make myself present and so begin to emancipate myself, surely this does not entitle me to say that I have also found a way to emancipate my students, or for my students to emancipate themselves? On the other hand, if I had not attempted to understand the circumstances of my own oppression, could I, from any position of understanding, even assert that they are oppressed? What is *my* recognition of *others'* oppression dependent upon? I have recognized and acted to overcome the conditions of my oppression, and have explained why I have come to be so concerned about how some of the children in my care are oppressed. Am I now morally obligated to act in ways that might enable them to recognize for themselves and strive to achieve the freedom that I have so determinedly sought for myself? Does

engagement always beget reciprocity, as Polakow has told us it does? (1985:829).

In this chapter I am going to consider how coming to a deeper understanding of my own oppression behooves me to pursue emancipatory pedagogy; how I can construe my own narratives as praxis; the ways and means that I have chosen to do my work; and finally, whether or not all primary teachers should take it upon themselves to listen for and respond to their call to act.

I. EMBRACING HISTORY

The truths of personal narratives are the truths revealed from real positions in the world, through lived experience in social relationships, in the context of passionate beliefs and partisan stands. They recount efforts to grapple with the world in all of its confusion and complexity and with the normal lack of omniscience that characterizes the human condition. It is precisely because of their subjectivity - their rootedness in time, place and personal experience, and their perspective-ridden character - that we value them (Personal Narratives Group, 1989: 263-4).

The narratives that have comprised the essence of this thesis have embraced my own history, and have revealed some of the places and ways that I have explored its surfaces and depths in order to come a deeper understanding of how my lived experience has influenced how I have become as teacher. I have dwelt on some of my losses and while I may have been mourning, I have also sought ways to assume a stance of hope and possibility. Can my narratives, imbued as they are with loss, sadness and anger, simultaneously summon a sense of hope? Or perhaps I should ask, what is a narrative that it can do both of these things simultaneously?

The Personal Narratives Group conceptualize what narratives are and can do when they write: "...personal narratives illuminate the course of a life and allow for its interpretation in its historical and cultural context" (1989:4). They continue "...narratives of acceptance and narratives of rebellion are responses to the system in which they originate and thus reveal its dynamics" (1989:8).

I locate my own narratives as rebellious rather than accepting. By writing these narratives, I have refused the silence that was an option for me, and have engaged in an active process of reclaiming myself from the institutions which I had become subordinate to. It is highly probable that from the perspective of an outsider at least and at many points to myself, I did seem to be very accepting of the changes that had been imposed upon me. When I read back through my personal journals, entries that I made four or five years ago, I recollect and feel how I was attempting to come to terms with the reconstruction of myself that was fabricated by others. The cathartic event that jolted me into rebellion was when my children were moved away from me, to a place somewhere - I did not know where. It was at this point that I flung myself into the precarious and unfamiliar territory of one who has become dispossessed. I determined that I would reclaim my history. I brought the political to bear on the everyday events of my life when I began to question and challenge the institutions that had the authority to encapsulate me, and arrest my growth as a mother and as a teacher. I chose

to open up my history to scrutiny.

In her writing about the role of memory in feminist fiction, G. Greene suggests:

Women especially need to remember because forgetting is a major obstacle to change. One of the most painful facts about the struggle for emancipation is that we have to keep starting it over again (1991:298).

I have remembered, but I have not just recounted my experiences. Within my writing, I have reflected upon, questioned and provoked the circumstances of my lived experience. I have not simply employed narrative as a method; rather, I have used narrative to create a praxis. I have used the stories from my own life and from the lives of children who have been my students, to frame and contextualize the questions that I have about institutional subordination and oppression. For example, the story The Day I Took Matthew To School With Me enabled me to challenge and delimit the authority of the institution of the school over my right to be mother and teacher simultaneously. Cynthia Was Given Away offered me a forum within which to explore the authority of the institution of the school and individual teachers to interfere with the sense-making capabilities of young children.

Individually and collectively, the stories have enabled me to explore some of the historical and social contexts within which human lives are embedded; to interpret with the intent of uncovering possibilities for emancipation. This is quite different from telling stories for the sake of story-telling, or only to enlighten oneself about one's own circumstances.

Searle asks "Who's building whose building?" (cited by

Cazden, 1988:26). His question is not unlike many of the ones that I have arrived at, as I have considered the possibilities for construing my narratives as praxis. I have begun to recognize that even though within my personal lived experience I have been at risk, in the school I hold immense power. I hold the potential to be just as destructive to the lives of the children who become my students, as my oppressors have held against me. I have the power to make or break lives. The choice is up to me. This is frightening talk. And yet, I cannot deny its truth. I am the oppressed, but I am also the oppressor.

Polakow writes:

Human action is imbued with inexhaustible possibilities of meaning which fill the world in which the child exists, and which she [sic] encounters in the course of growing up. It is this personal history that the child shapes through the meanings that she assigns to her experience, to the beckoning world which is an invitation to her become a meaning-maker (1982:28).

But, I argue, children are often unable to recognize the potential or extent of their subordination. How can they know? Ensclosed as they are within the institutions of family and school, they become meaning-makers of their experience, but the experiences that they have are controlled and circumscribed by the institutions that house them. Or perhaps they are oppressed only in my eyes? Who am I to determine that someone else is lost to themselves? I do not presume to equate my own lived experience with theirs. That is, I try to avoid generalizations, and prefer instead to consider the uniqueness of each individual's personal situation. Nonetheless, as I have already

stated, common themes have become apparent. I have endeavoured to uncover our commonalities, rather than force-fit the stories of someone else to my understandings of what oppression is and does to its victims. I cannot dismiss my power altogether, given the sturdy and enduring infrastructure of the institution that I work within. But I can and do begin to question my right to it.

Paley reflects on the necessity for the reciprocity of individual inclusion as she seeks to negotiate with her students a sense of community in the classroom by trying to represent others' voices in the stories that she tells.

Something else was becoming clear to me, and it had much to do with the golden rule I had been told about in childhood but had not often thought of in my own classroom as a teacher: I must not do to a child that which I would not have done to me (1990:90).

So it is for me. If I purport to pursue emancipatory pedagogy, I must be constantly mindful of the inherent power that I hold over these young lives. I must constantly remind myself of the danger for subordination that my role as teacher inherently holds.

Polakow has told us that "engagement begets reciprocity" but she tells us more besides: "engagement begets reciprocity and *participation in the world of the other and evokes for us the call to act*" (1985:829). I can seek ways to use my power tentatively and cautiously. Through these stories that I have written about myself, I acknowledge that we do not always determine how we will live our lives. Often, too often, and frequently with great danger to our individual beings, these decisions are made for us. Hope and possibility lie in the

chance that, although we may feel lost, we may be able to reclaim ourselves, to rise above, though never eradicate, the injustices that others have done to us.

Such a stance of self-reclamation cannot be gained by simply pointing fingers and charging accusations, although such action may be a necessary part of asserting oneself against one's oppressors. But it is also the easiest part, and is born out of anger, outrage and rebellion, which are in turn preliminary, and often necessary steps towards finding or re-finding oneself amidst the chaos and disruption of human co-existence.

A less aggressive, more assertive route is to attempt to uncover for oneself the motives that lead to self-examinatory practice. Praxis may emerge when one extends self-examination into the realm of human relationships and interactions that one participates in. Lather writes:

Research approaches inherently reflect our beliefs about the world we live in and want to live in...Emancipatory knowledge increases an awareness of the contradictions distorted or hidden by everyday understandings, and in so doing it directs attention to the possibility for social transformation inherent in the present configuration of social processes (1991:51-2)..

My approach to my research does most thoroughly reflect my beliefs about the world that I live in. The narratives that I have chosen to relate exemplify my belief that human interactions and relationships are neither static nor isolated from the social and political contexts that enmesh us. As individuals, we may be a product of these contexts, but reciprocally, these contexts are a product of the society that we collectively comprise. The

historical, social and political dimensions of our existence are not self-productive absolutes. Their construction is firmly grounded in, and dependent upon human activity. It was no arbitrary coincidence that I lost my status as full-time mother, any more than it was an arbitrary coincidence that Cynthia was moved to another teacher. Human activity is often deliberate, but it is not always kind. There was never a reason for anyone to suppose that I didn't want my children. There was never a reason to suppose that I did not want what was best for Cynthia, although my actions may seem to indicate otherwise. This, above all else, is probably the one assumption that has compelled my work - the tendency to presume that we know what an individual thinks or feels or wonders about, without ever bothering to ask. Fortunately, there are rebels in our midst. When I say that I locate my narratives as rebellious, rather than accepting, what I am really saying is that I am prepared to challenge presumptions that have been based on not knowing and not bothering to find out.

Problems, difficulties and dissonance arise when voiced individuals, and I have become one, protest against the dominance and subterfuge of such presumptions. We must welcome such dissonance, for it is only within these raucous and abrasive chords that the noise of praxis may begin to be heard. It is neither a silent call, nor a harmonious one. The call to praxis, to action, is loud and disruptive. It challenges the mainstream, the status quo; it challenges the apparent givens that are based

upon presumption. I have written this before: we must never, ever presume to know what it is that compels a person to act in a particular way or to accept what may seem to be unacceptable, according to our individual histories and sensitivities. The sheer arrogance of such presumption renders praxis impossible. But without praxis, the voiceless can never be heard, will never be heard.

II. THE POSSIBILITIES OF STUMBLING

At times, my research has felt clumsy and my writing has seemed a discordant and inarticulate jumble of ideas that has confused and clouded the passionate clarity of my sense about what I do and why I do it. This is hard work, this stumbling about, for all of us! I have spent countless hours watching many of my students stumble over words as they learn to read; over their feet as they learn to skip and gallop; over their own and each other's emotions as they learn to share our space with a myriad of individuals; over the circumstances of their lives that sometimes challenge all of the resources they have acquired to make sense of their place in the world. Optimally, stumbling will give way to security or competence, and hopefully grace. But the stumbling itself should not be dismissed quickly or lightly. Sometimes it can tell us the things that we most need to know.

I SPENT THE SUMMER NOT WRITING

*And remember, we all stumble, every one of us. That's
why it's a comfort to go hand in hand.*

E.K. Brough

I spent the summer not writing. True, I did do many other things. But mainly, I did not write. This act of not writing is important because I had predetermined that my primary activity during the summer of 1993 would be the writing of my thesis. I knew, of course, that I would have to extend this writing into the autumn months, to allow for revising, editing, acting upon suggestions from my committee, and so on. I knew that I would not complete the thesis during the summer break. But I did intend to devote most of my time to its writing.

In a way, I did do that. I did honour the time-part of my commitment. Except that I spent the apportioned time not writing, instead of writing. Around the end of July, I began to panic. The summer was speeding by. I had not yet begun to write. I was showing up at my thesis-group meetings empty-handed, or with a clumsy summary of some work done six months previous. In fact, I forgot one meeting altogether in mid-August. I did actually show up for a few minutes - having been inexplicably jarred to recall - though I was quite late, and had three children waiting in the car for me to take them to the neighbourhood swimming-pool! I had made other plans, and obviously not writing was much more a priority than writing. I did stay long enough to dredge up an apology, to talk briefly about my process of not writing, and to accept a piece of writing

from the other two members of my group. I promised to read these and to respond to them by phone in the next four days before I left town.

On the fifth day, I found myself on the ferry to Nanaimo, reading their writing. I had not phoned them, and there was considerable room for guilt here - their writing was powerful and emotional and personal - it was of a depth that merited a thoughtful response. If I had written their words and shared them, I would have been both hurt and insulted that they seemed so undeserving of a response. But the ferry was no sooner out of Horseshoe Bay than I had already been into the Concession to buy a magazine. In all fairness to myself, I did not even open its cover until after I had read their writings. I decided that I would write each of them a letter in response. I even got up three mornings in a row at my sister's house in Nanaimo where I was vacationing with my children, and began writing letters to them. Furthermore, I had brought a number of texts to read. However, their letters remained incomplete and unmailed; the books remained unread: I found myself spending my mornings at the kitchen table with my sister and her husband and our five sons, juggling cereal boxes and pitchers of milk and dishes of brown sugar while watching out the window for the deer and rabbits that tend to meander through their yard in the mid-morning sun. The time had come for me to dispense with both my panic and any plans of writing this summer. I was on a holiday with my children. Subliminally, I had known before I left that I

would not read or write a single word. I finally admitted the reality, and, guilt-free, I spent my time at other pursuits: one day was taken up with picking blueberries; another with lazy floating upon the Nanaimo River; another with making blackberry jam and then sailing over to Newcastle Island.

Clearly, there was a place here for me to be not writing. I had another agenda - a vacation with my children and my relatives, who are my friends as well as my family. While my agenda may seem to have been a self-indulgent one, I suggest that in fact, it is not at all. It holds a much broader embrace, one which I may easily extend to the life that occurs within the walls of my classroom, and perhaps beyond that. Perhaps it is universal.

We tend to ask so much of the children who come in to our classrooms. We expect them to be on task, to be engaged, to commit themselves entirely to our agendas for their learning. Sometimes, perhaps very often, we do allow them to contribute to the setting of these agendas, by choosing for themselves the books that they will read during Reading-Time, or selecting their own topics for research-projects. While this may be an erstwhile and "educationally-sound" stance to assume, still, very often, there is little room for distancing themselves from the expectations of the school. There is, too often, too little time for children to pause and take respite from all of the institutionally-imposed activities; to pause and wrestle with and settle into the demands on their lives that arise beyond the

classroom walls; to embed, perhaps nestle themselves, temporarily or lengthily, in the stumbling points of their lives.

Specifically, I think back to this morning, the first day of school, September 1993. Danny saw his "real" dad (he lives with his "step"-dad) this summer for the first time in five years. His "real" dad has spent the last five years in prison on a charge of domestic violence. Danny found out in June why his father has been absent from his life for five years. This morning, Danny was not so much concerned with the start of the new school year and finding out who his new teacher would be, as he was with letting me know about finally making a new connection with his "real" dad. Danny has been in my class for three years. He will not be in my class this year. He was only with me for an hour this morning. Tomorrow, he will go to his new teacher. He does not ask me about this. Instead, he tells me about seeing his "real" dad, and only wants to show me the watch that his father gave him as a gift. How can I possibly begin to relate the prescribed curriculum to Danny's experience? How can I possibly justify that this year's math curriculum heralds more important discoveries than the one he has just made? It seems to me that Danny may need a few days, or weeks, or perhaps even months, to float lazily down a river - symbolic or otherwise - to come to terms with such a significant event. And what about Sarah, who has been abandoned by both her mother and her father, and has found herself living with her grandparents who have already told me that they don't really want her, either. "But

what are we to do?" they asked me. "We can hardly leave her on her own. After all, she is only eight years old."

It seems to me that I am the lucky one. I pursue my self-appointed task from a position of privilege. I had some intuitive sense that I needed some time to not write - to embed or nestle myself within the important relationships which simultaneously contextualize and drive my writing, and without which, my work is meaningless and nihilistic. I was able to take the time and I chose to spend it doing the things that I both needed and wanted to do, and that my children needed and wanted to do: picking berries, floating down the river, and sailing over to Newcastle Island to watch the sunset. Lucky me, that I am in a position to put aside institutionally-imposed expectations in order to recognize, articulate and honour my own needs. I took the summer off. I didn't write a word. Should not Danny and Sarah be afforded the same privilege?

Must we be "on" all the time? The more that I dwell on the reasons for my own not writing, the more aware I become that at this particular point in my life, I needed to take a respite, to pause and consider the context and purposes for my (not) writing; to determine that gains that I might make one way or the other. In some ways I stumbled, but this represents, indeed embodies, the fallibility of human activity. Honouring the possibility of stumbling fortifies us against the possibility of failure.

The reciprocity of shared lived experience is a theme that continues to dominate my exploration of the classroom vista.

Mutual engagement - that is, between myself and my students - imposes on me, the teacher, the obligation to honour their need to stumble, their right to become preoccupied with life circumstances that obscure and displace the importance of externally-imposed agendas and curricula. Further, it behooves us all, teacher and student alike, to examine the possibilities for learning that stumbling affords. There is much to learn from what is not written. There is much to learn from witnessing each others' stumbling. There is much to learn from not doing.

III. MOVING TOWARDS POSSIBILITIES

This is what we shall look for as we move: freedom developed by human beings who acted to make a space for themselves in the presence of others, human beings who become "challengers" ready for alternatives, alternatives that include caring and community. And we shall seek, as we go, implications for emancipatory education conducted by and for those willing to take responsibility for themselves and for each other. We want to discover how to open spaces for persons in their plurality, spaces where they can become different, where they can grow (Greene, 1988:56).

The dissonance that I have both created and discerned has been for me a welcome and liberating reprieve from the dominating and silencing hierarchies of the institutions that I have been challenging. Now it is necessary and more than timely for me to contextualize and substantiate my dissonance by naming the methods that have enabled me to create it. At the beginning, I found myself resisting the possibility of writing a thesis that could be essentialized as purely phenomenological or ethnographic. I was concerned that the course of my inquiry

would become subordinate to the demands of the method. Considering that the questions and issues that I was grappling with were essentially concerned with how it is for an individual to be subordinated, it is not surprising that I initially resisted any dominating, overarching hierarchy of method. This is not a dismissal on my part of the contributions and support that phenomenology or ethnography can give to my inquiry. But for me, within the context of the ways that I work and think and settle myself into my world, my narratives had to come first. However, once I had done much of the writing, I was able to consider how phenomenology and ethnography could substantiate and validate the nature of my inquiry, in their individual and collective ways. For me there was never a question of rejecting method. Rather, it was a matter of carefully, selectively choosing methods within the context of my narrated lived experience that would enable me to qualify and broaden the questions that I have been asking, and the answers and possibilities that I have arrived at. Van Manen writes:

A distinguishing feature of a human science approach to pedagogy is how the notions of theory and research are to be related to the practice of living. In contrast to the more positivistic and behavioural empirical sciences, human science does not see theory as something that stands *before* practice in order to "inform" it. Rather theory enlightens practice. Practice (or life) always comes first and theory comes after as a result of reflection. "The integrity of praxis does not depend on theory," said Schleiermacher, "but praxis can become more aware of itself by means of theory" (1964, p.40)" (1989:15).

In retrospect, I see that phenomenology has enabled me to place myself at the center of my work as I have explored the

circumstances and conditions of my lived experience and related oppression. It has enabled me to narrate significant events of my life from a subjective position, and to utilize my subjective understandings in order to raise my questions about how it might be for someone else to be voiceless. In writing about myself, I have uncovered some circumstances and consequences of oppression, and have firmly grounded them in my own lived experience.

But phenomenology - in its purest sense - does not invoke a call to act. As van Manen tells us:

"...the human scientist does not go anywhere. He or she stays right there in the world we share with our fellow [sic] human beings. And yet it would be wrong to say that the human scientist has no compelling "stories" to tell. Aren't the most captivating stories exactly those which help us to understand better what is most common, most taken-for-granted, and what concerns us most ordinarily and directly? (1989:19).

For me, the stories from my students that have been most captivating have been those that spoke to my own lived experience, as I have already explained. But I have regarded and located these stories - my own and those of the children - as problems that require attending to, although I know that their solutions are not simple, nor readily apparent. Furthermore, while I have admitted to being captivated by the stories that carry themes that are most like my own, if only according to my own interpretations of them, I do believe that such captivation is reminiscent of Polakow's assertion that "engagement begets reciprocity." This reciprocity seems to me to invoke a call to action. That is, if I utilize the stories of these children to reinforce my own voice, surely that obligates me to act on their

behalf. Yet, van Manen tells me that "phenomenology does not problem solve" (1989:23). A purely phenomenological inquiry would be satisfied by my relating, interpreting and reflecting upon the particular circumstances of my lived experience, without considering the cultural or political implications.

But, a crucial aspect of my research has been to find ways to bring the critical to bear on the phenomenological nature of my writing. I have been endeavouring to interrupt and break the passive silence that shrouds and conceals evidence of genuine human activity within the school. I have attempted to thwart the possibility of denying the integrity and dignity that my lived experience and the lived experiences of the children who are my students, are due. To do any less, would to me, be just one more act of oppression. If I have made anything at all evident, surely it has been my refusal to succumb to the dictate of authority, whether it be imposed by method or institution. Thus, I felt compelled to look outside of phenomenology, towards an ethnographic approach which allows me to assume a stance of participant-observer in the landscape that I have researched, to question and validate my right to write stories about others, to find ways to speak with them, rather than for them. According to Hammersley and Atkinson (1983), ethnography insists that I assume a position of critical reflexivity.

The first and most important step towards a resolution of the problems...(is) to recognize the reflexive character of social research: that is to recognize that we are part of the social world we study...this is not a matter of methodological commitment, it is an existential fact. There is no way in which we can

escape the social world in order to study it; nor fortunately, is that necessary (1983:14-15).

My narratives have revealed how I am implicated in the social world that I have been researching. Certainly, limitations, subjectivities and boundaries have become apparent. While I have honoured and invoked the essential centrality of self that phenomenology requires - and this has often required frightening, disarming introspection - I have also moved beyond self, into the domain of ethnography, into provocative territory that has sometimes been hostile, has always been challenging, and has necessarily required me to consider the consequences of my actions on those who I have been researching - myself, my children, and the children who have been my students. I have insisted on embracing my history and on steadfastly and resolutely attempting to honour the things themselves that incited my inquiry. But I have also insisted on uncovering possibilities for freedom by subjecting my own introspection to the same scrutiny that I have imposed on my oppressors. By doing so, I have invoked my call to action.

IV. WHO ARE YOU NOT TO DO THIS?

Agar (1980) poses the question to ethnographers: "Who are you to do this?" He challenges fieldworkers to carefully consider the potential benefits and consequences of their research. Does the participant-observer have a right to be in the landscape? Who will gain from the work that s/he does there? What will be gained? What may be lost or surrendered? Is there

a risk that someone's history will be invented for them?

I have been a fieldworker within my classroom. I am a participant-observer who has been actively constructing the very landscape that I research. I live out a substantial part of my life in the culture of my classroom, in language with the children who are my students, in making history together with other human beings. Our mutual influence over, and participation in each other's lived experience increases the complexity and difficulty of my task, and escalates the importance and urgency of my agenda for emancipatory pedagogy, because I am a participant in the history that I risk inventing.

I wonder if for primary teachers, intimately situated as we are within the lives of our students, the question should not become: "Who are you *not* to do this? Who are you *not* to recognize the power of your role, the immense influence of your activity as teacher on the lives of the children who are your students? Who are you *not* to take up your call to action? As I have written before, there is a potential for great arrogance in this job. There is also a very dangerous risk of reckless ignorance.

But how does a teacher hear her/his call to action? Can one be told to pursue emancipatory pedagogy? Must individual teachers experience victimization themselves, and recognize that they have become victims before they can pursue praxis? There are many criteria that must be met in order for someone to become a teacher, but I do not think that any conscientious recognition

or opposition to individual oppression by institutions is one of them, even though there is an abundance of empirical evidence that shows the damage that can be done by well-intentioned teachers when discontinuity arises between the values, history, and socio-economic backgrounds of the teachers and the children who are their students (Ashton-Warner, 1963; Cazden, 1988; Osser, 1983; Polakow, 1982, 1985). But I have met few teachers who do not genuinely care about the children in their classes, who are not dismayed, saddened, often outraged by the circumstances of many children's lives that they daily see and hear about.

Is there a solution to this disabling situation that seems to me to afflict children and teachers wherein, despite all best intentions, both become individually subordinated to the agenda of the institution that houses them? I do not know. But in the midst of my not knowing, I can at least comfort myself with the knowledge that other researchers (Adan, 1991; Ashton-Warner, 1963; Brookes, 1992; Grumet, 1988; Haig-Brown, 1988; Paley, 1981; The Personal Narratives Group, 1989; Polakow, 1985, 1989) have provoked me to explore the circumstances and conditions of my own oppression, and to consider how my own lived experience has influenced and transformed the stance that I assume as teacher. Their words have helped me to hear and articulate my own call to action, and I have sought ways to raise my voice with theirs.

I have come to believe that where each of us are when we hear and decide to act upon our call can be just as informing, if not more so, as how we choose to explore and map the territory

that our inquiries are located within. My call came within my reluctant acceptance of my role as part-time mother. I have explained that my mapping of this unfamiliar terrain has been a somewhat solitary pursuit, but I have also explained that I have not taken the entire journey by myself. Many people have profoundly influenced and supported the course of my inquiry. Some have been friends, some have been colleagues, some are individuals that I only know by having read their own work (Polakow, 1982, 1985, 1989; Paley, 1981, 1989, 1990; Ashton-Warner, 1963).

But whoever and whatever these people may have done or been for me, incidentally or intentionally, I do think that a particular and hopeful beauty is captured in the chance that an individual may find a way to look beyond the tragic dimension of their experience, towards the possibility of freedom for themselves, and maybe for the others with whom they share the space of life.

V. MOVING TOWARDS REST

...and then we went to California and then we went to here and it seems like we keep on moving. It's like, it's like, like a concert. A concert moves to different places (she smiles)...different people that sing in different concerts, they don't always stay in one place and do a concert there and there and there. They move all over, and we kind of do, too.

- Sonia, age 8

I am struck by what seems to me to be a particularly sophisticated and poetic metaphor from such a young mind. It does not matter where this idea came from, and even its eloquence can be overlooked. This idea which Sonia has told me "just

popped into her head" is a means by which she makes sense of events in her life that she has had no control over. Perhaps some of us would not find this metaphor to be a restful one. But, as I recall the look of serenity on Sonia's as she spoke to me, I remind myself once again not to impose my own experience and assumptions on how another searches for a restful place. There is no room here for judgement or critique. There is only room for acceptance, and the possibility of understanding.

The expansion of a child's mind can be a beautiful growth. And in beauty are included the qualities of equilibrium, harmony and rest. There's no more comely word in the language than "rest." All the movement in life, and out of it too, is towards a condition of rest (Ashton-Warner, 1963:93).

The metaphor of the concert seems to lend an air of equilibrium, harmony and rest to Sonia as she makes the best of the transience of her life. For myself, although there have been a good many harmonious and restful moments, so much of the human activity that I have participated in or witnessed seems to have been tinged with loss and sadness. Sonia had to choose between her parents; Cynthia was given away; Matthew was told that he could not be with his mother; the gardener cut down my wisteria vines; I have become a part-time mother. Still, I do not choose to dwell upon the sadness. I continue to seek ways to move beyond it, towards places of possibility and hope. I will go on learning from the children who touch my life. But I have not yet arrived at a place of rest. There are still too many questions waiting to be asked, too much work waiting to be done. I pursue my call to action.

APPENDIX A

CHARTING THE PATH OF MY RESEARCH

If the writing is honest, it cannot be separated from the man [sic] who wrote it. It isn't so much his mirror, as it is the distillation, the essence of what is strongest and purest in his nature, whether that be gentleness or anger, serenity or torment, light or dark. This makes it deeper than the surface likeness of a mirror, and that much more truthful.

- Tennessee Williams

I had set today aside to finish this appendix. Although it was warm outside and the subdued glimmer of autumn brightness beckoned me, I was so close to finishing this work that I really didn't mind the prospect of sitting indoors to complete the last few pages. Then the phone rang.

My mother had been taken to the hospital with heart problems. I dropped my writing immediately and drove to the hospital where I found her in a bed in the Emergency ward, full of wires and tubes. The cardiologist arrived shortly after me, admitted her to Intensive Care, and there she will wait over the weekend until the appropriate medical personnel are appointed on Monday or Tuesday to administer the required angiogram and angioplasty. I stayed there with her as long as they would let me. Finally, it was time to go and so I returned home.

Now I am back at my desk once again, and I cannot help but think about the similarity of our positions. Celia, my second-

advisor, asked me to write this appendix because, as she put it "I think it would be valuable for other graduate students to know what it is like to write from the heart." Tonight, my mother is confined to a small room in hospital because of her heart. And me, I am confined to a small room in my home because of my heart. I am not sure which one will be most easily mended. If I can express even one concern about what it is to write from the heart, it is that it has required me to visit again and again the saddest and most painful points of my life. I am not sure that it would not have been healthier for me, in the long run, to move away from some of this sorrow much more quickly than I have done. Writing from my heart has made me stay sad.

I have told him it's very easy, anyone can fly. All you need is somewhere to go that you can't get to any other way. The next thing you know, you're flying among the stars.

- Faith Ringgold

"Flying among the stars" certainly does not capture the essence of the journey that I took by way of my research. At the risk of cliché, it was often rocky and fraught with frustration and despair. But "flying among the stars" resounds with such a sense of hopefulness. It was this stance of hope that I continually sought as I proceeded along the path that my inquiry set for me, or that I set for myself by way of pursuing my inquiry. "All you need is somewhere to go that you can't get to any other way." My journey has been as much about change, detour

and discovery of previously unfamiliar and unseen routes, as it has been about arriving somewhere. I had to take the journey that my research required. In a sense, I was, indeed, seeking a way to "fly among the stars."

But what did I actually "do" on this journey? How did I proceed with my inquiry? How did I arrive at the place where I knew that what I was seeking to do was to raise my own voice? As I explained in Chapter Two, I began to do graduate work because it seemed to me that this was the only way that I could compensate for not having my children with me on a full-time basis. Dutifully, I made my way through the required courses. I submitted papers, made presentations, wrote "simulated" research-proposals. Then, I arrived at the end of the course-work, at the place where I was required to commit myself to a topic that would ultimately culminate in a thesis. My research proposal explained that I was going to explore how the narratives that young children write reveal the ways they make sense of their lived experience. My intent was to garner some insights about the daily realities of their lived experience so that I could teach them in ways that were purposeful, relevant and meaningful to them.

I began to gather the information that I believed I needed. In February 1992, I started to write fieldnotes. Although I had been keeping a professional journal throughout my career, at this point I started to pay more attention to what I was writing. In part, this was due to the fact that I had taken a course in

qualitative research. I began to think about the perspective that I was writing from: who was I writing for? why was I more sympathetic to, or moved by some children's stories than by others? What were the biases and subjectivities that I was bringing to my documentations of someone else's experiences?

During the day I would make my observations or engage in extended conversations with children. Over a period of ten school-months, I tried to set aside at least three half-hour slots a week for doing this, some weeks more and others less. Afterwards, often during the evening at home, I would revisit my jottings, filling in the blanks where I could, and posing questions and comments about what had been disclosed, how I had responded, and how this interaction could inform or challenge my practice. For example, Tony had told me over and over again that he couldn't read. I was able to sit and watch Tony engage in reading with other children, to listen carefully to what he was doing that he insisted was "not reading", and to come to understand that my perceptions of reading and his were very different. So, when I wrote in Chapter Four, that Tony had no sense of his right to be in Grade One, I was able to base it upon the discrepancy that emerged between what his understanding of reading was, and what my understanding of it was.

During the spring of 1993, I conducted a series of interviews with what I determined to be a representative group of the children who were my students. I carefully selected a group of eight children that reflected the socio-economic, gender,

racial and immigrant diversity of my students. The interviews lasted from twenty minutes to an hour, and were based upon a series of questions that I had formulated.¹³ In retrospect, I wonder about these questions. It seems to me that they are questions that I was wanting someone to ask me.

On the other hand, when I formulated them, I was attempting to offer open-ended opportunities for them to speak to their lived experience that at the same time were sufficiently grounded, or concrete if you will, that young children could make sense of them. I was not interviewing adults. I was interviewing young children, and it was no small task to come up with a set of questions that could both inform my inquiry, and that they could understand and respond to.

I think that, in the end, my questions accomplished both, although I could probably have asked others. But the stories that their responses yielded were often more than overwhelming. At times, I was completely taken aback by what they told me. Furthermore, I knew that if I hadn't been conducting the research that prompted and required me to ask the questions, I would never, ever have heard the stories from these children's lives that most of them willingly, often eagerly told. I wonder now if, as a teacher, I have been too cautious about probing the innermost thoughts and feelings about the children who are my students. I have always worried about the ethics involved in

¹³. See Appendix B for a list of the questions, and consent documentation.

asking my students questions about their personal lives. But, from their responses, I now wonder if I have not asked them enough.

I offered each child a variety of sites to be interviewed within - a table in the corner of the classroom, the playhouse, the conference-room, the library. To a person, they each chose the play-house. Perhaps it was because it was inside the open-area without actually seeming to be a part of it. We could sit there, at the little table on little chairs, able to look out at what everyone else was doing while they could look in on us without quite being able to hear us. Common but at the same time secluded - a part and yet not a part. The table in the corner was very public; the library and the conference-room were very distant and neither were places where we ever spent time together. Perhaps the playhouse was both one thing and the other. Familiar and distant at the same time - comforting in its familiarity and yet shielded as they made their way through the unfamiliar territory of being "interviewed" by their teacher: that is, tape-recorder upon the table, tape inserted, counter switched to 00, and then the record-button pushed the moment that the interview began. [I never asked any of them about this. Perhaps I should have. Next time, if there is one, I know that I will.]

I arrived at the end of June 1993. I said good-bye to many of the children whom I had been researching. Although some of them would be in my class again the next year, there are others

that moved on to other teachers, or to other schools so that we have never seen each other again. Aside from memories, the only evidence I have that we once existed together are the textual constructions that I made of them.

I began what was to become the most arduous part of my journey, and it took me more than a year to make my way through it. The summer of 1993 is the summer that I said I spent "not writing." I spent many, many hours at my desk transcribing and coding the interviews that I had tape-recorded with these children. I ended up with about one hundred and fifty pages of transcripts. There are stories in these transcripts that I have not even begun to tell, and many that will probably never be retold, by me or by their tellers. By the end of July, I thought that I had finished the "research" part, and was ready to begin writing. I had three binders full of interview transcripts, log entries and fieldnotes.

I sat myself down at my desk, and started to write about what I had learned from these children. But the words wouldn't come. Actually, many words came to me, but they were all about me. I started to ask the questions "Why am I doing this work?", and "Who am I doing it for?" I spent many months reflecting upon these questions. I was feeling more than a little distressed that, having completed all my research, I seemed to be unable to make any sense of it within the context of my research proposal. Two or three evenings a week, between my regular teaching duties, and every other weekend - the weekends that my children were not

with me - I gave my life over to writing this thesis. I spent hours and hours sitting, waiting, hoping that somehow all the pieces would begin to fit together, and I would come to understand what it was I trying to do. I spent most of a year trying to compose a thesis that seemed to have become completely elusive. Many of the evenings were spent in going over the readings that I had done, revisiting the transcripts that I had coded, the fieldnotes that I had written the previous year. Every now and then I would have a "eureka" moment, and feeling quite able and fortified, I would set in on the following weekend to act on the enlightenment that I had realized. But weekend, after weekend, I seemed to be accomplishing nothing.

I was doing "something" on these weekends. I was writing about myself. Everytime I started to write about the children, I found myself writing about myself. Something in one of the stories that I was attempting to construct and then locate within the context of my inquiry, would trigger some memory that I had, and I found myself deconstructing my own experiences. But I knew that this personal writing didn't qualify as "research". I believed that I had to get past this stage of self-indulgence, so that I could get to the children and do the "real work" that I had set out to do. But it wouldn't come. It didn't seem to be there.

There were many times when I decided to quit. I determined more than once that I simply wasn't smart enough, that my academic expectations of myself were over-inflated and seriously

misguided. I tried to talk about my work to my advisors and friends, but I was finding that I couldn't explain it to anyone anymore. What had seemed so clear to me within my research proposal and the process of gathering data had become completely vague.

Last week, when we were discussing the possible content of this appendix, Celia asked me "What was the pain that you felt while you were sitting there by yourself for so many months not being able to write?" I have lost count of the tears, and their number doesn't really matter. I prefer to remember the euphoria I felt when I realized that what I had just finished writing was strong, and powerful and evocative. Just the same, I think that the one image of myself that will stay most closely with me as I move away from this very difficult and challenging section of my life, is the image of myself pacing up and down my hall. It is no more than twenty feet long, and completely boring in its absolute beigeness: beige walls, beige carpet, beige territory. How many times did I stand up from my computer, leave the room where I was trying to write, and begin to walk toward its end, or its beginning, both vantage points being completely interchangeable. Up and down, up and down, up and down, seeking a word, seeking a sentence, seeking to clarify an idea, seeking to uncover just where I stood in the midst of it all. The hall became a channel, a channel where I resided. Neither one end or the other was my destiny, but they both offered passage.

There was a mirror at one end of the hall. I would look up

in the middle of my pacing, and see myself there. I would wonder to myself "Who is this person in the glass? What is she trying to do? She looks like me, and when I move just so, she moves with me, just so. But who is she? Does she know things already that I have yet to discover?" Somedays she looked so confident and brave, and other days, she looked so lost and confused. I started to measure myself by her appearance. The line that furrowed between her brows was becoming deeper. If I stretched my face just so, it would even out again. But I knew that its increasing depth measured an alarming wont of internal peace. I was tired. I wanted to rest. But at the same time, I knew that I could not rest until my work was done. I had to set a deadline for myself. I couldn't spend any more of my life in this middle-ground.

June 1994 arrived. The end of another school year. Four years had passed since I took my first graduate-course. Having spent so long being able to write only about myself, I finally accepted that there were stories about me that I needed to tell before I could begin to tell stories about anyone else. Quite simply, although it took me so long to realize this, it is the stories about me that reveal why I find the others' so compelling.

The irony of my position has become apparent to me. I was so concerned about voicing the voiceless children in my classroom, and yet I was unable to voice myself. If there was a genuine risk of self-indulgence here, perhaps it lay more within

the possibility of not writing, than it did in writing about myself.

On July 1, 1994, I took down the calendar and divided up the month into five equal portions, one for each chapter. My children were going to be away with their father all of July. I had a month of clear, unobstructed time awaiting me. I mustered up all my courage and strength, and I began to write. I pulled out the drafts that I had begun over the last year, and found that I already had a substantial amount of text to work with. Although there was a lot of revising and editing that needed to be done, most of the first four chapters were already in place. There were times when I couldn't tell which chapter should come first, or which story should go in which chapter. I spent a lot of the month moving things around from place to place, trying to build a sense of flow and continuity into the entire text. Gradually, day by day the text began to cohere. At the end of July, I had four solid chapters completed, and the fifth followed soon after.

The research that I did could have produced several different theses. There was not only one possible route to take. I could have been completely absent from my inquiry. I could have written only from the vantage point of teacher. As I have already said, many of the stories that I gathered from children have remained untold. I could have taken a different selection of stories, and written a completely different thesis than the one that I did write.

I will surprise myself if I completely abandon this project that has engaged all of my passions to such an intense degree for so many years, just because I have finished writing the thesis that is required for graduation. Prior to beginning my graduate-work, I was already beginning to explore and frame many of the questions that I pursued within this text. While the process of writing, or "not" writing, my thesis has offered me many insights and answers, it has simultaneously enabled me to raise many more questions. I have just begun to think about the limitations and oppression of individual existence that documentation practices impose. Are the children that I have written about genuinely present in my research? Or is it only my textual constructions of them that exist upon these pages? I have just changed teaching positions, and am now teaching a Grade 6/7 class in a neighbourhood that has a very different socio-economic base than the other two schools where I have taught. Will all my beliefs about pedagogy hold true in this new environment? Paley writes:

This is nearly always the way. Problems are not meant to be solved. They are ours to practice on, to explore the possibilities with, to help us study cause and effect. Important issues can't be solved with one grand plan--or in one school year. Some are worked at for a lifetime, returning in different disguises, requiring fresh insights (1990: 80).

For the most part, I am satisfied with what I have written. I have admitted that I could have written several different texts from the stories that I gathered. At times, towards the end, it was very difficult not to dismiss the early writing that I had done as simplistic or facile, or just too self-absorbed. It is

so easy to find oneself caught up in a cycle of abandoning what one has acquired solid understanding of in favour of probing what one is not yet clear about. I had to learn to honour the place where I was at the point that I did that piece of writing, and to accept that it had merit and integrity because it was all new to me when I was in the midst of writing about it. I learned that research is an ongoing process of merging experience with discovery; of incorporating new knowledge with prior understandings and schemata. Somedays it is difficult to discern just where the learning began, and it will probably never be possible to know just where it might take me.

Having peeled back many of the layers of my history, I have uncovered some important truths for myself, and have been able to invoke a reciprocity between what I have learned for myself, and what I may be able to learn about others. I am still concerned about some of the risks that I have taken. I am worried that some people who are close to me might feel hurt by some of the things that I have written. I directed some harsh criticism towards the bureaucracy of the school district that I teach for, and I wonder if there will be negative implications for my career. As much as I have attempted to disguise the identities of the children whose stories I have told, I sometimes worry that someone will be recognized, and I wonder what the implications might be for them.

But all my fears aside, I believe that what I have written and how I have written it has integrity in at least two ways:

first, as academic research; and, secondly, because it honours and upholds my conviction that individuals must be entitled to human regard for the conditions of their lives. Most importantly, by writing from my heart, I have extended this entitlement to myself.

APPENDIX B

Appendix B is comprised of four documents:

1. a copy of the interview Questionnaire.
2. a copy of the letter of consent from School District #43 (Coquitlam), approving my research project.
3. a copy of the letter of consent that I sent to the parents of the students that I interviewed.
4. a copy of the Informed Consent for Minors form that I sent to the parents of the students that I interviewed.

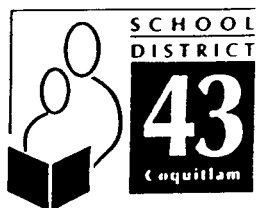
It is important to explain how I obtained consent from the children who I interviewed, all of whom were students in my class. I did not obtain written consent from these children because they were at early stages of literacy development, and were therefore unable to decode the written text that would have been required.

However, before I contacted any of their parents, I verbally explained to each child, individually, in terms that I felt were accessible to them, what I was doing, and why I was requesting permission to interview them. I informed each child that s/he had the right to say no. At the beginning of each interview, I informed each child that they didn't have to say anything they didn't want to say, and that they could withdraw from the interview whenever they wanted to. All of the children consented to being interviewed; some chose not to answer particular

questions; none of them chose to withdraw before I indicated that the interview was over. All children were offered the opportunity to listen to the tape-recordings of the interviews, as an alternative to reading the transcribed text or the narratives that I constructed from them, again in consideration of their developmental inability to read such complex text.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Who are the most important people in your life?
2. What do you like to do best when you are away from school?
3. Describe something that's happened to you that made you feel:
 - a) happy
 - b) sad
 - c) angry
 - d) proud
 - e) frightened
 - f) shy/embarrassed
4. Describe what a story is.
5. When do you tell/write stories about yourself and the things that happen to you?
6. Who do you tell/write your stories to?
7. How do you decide whether or not to tell/write a story about something that's happened to you?



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March 15, 1993

Ms. Joyce Bodell
Harbour View Elementary School
960 Lillian Street
Coquitlam, B.C.
V3J 5C7

Dear Ms. Bodell:

I am writing to acknowledge receipt of your letter dated March 3, in which you request permission to undertake a research project with students in your class at Harbour View Elementary School. I understand it is in partial fulfillment of requirements for your Masters Thesis at Simon Fraser University and that the purpose of your study is to explore how childrens' oral and written narratives can provide direction for teaching practices.

I have reviewed the purpose and design of your study and can lend district support to your work in this area. However, I will need to see a copy of the letter requesting permission from parents for their children to participate in your study before you have permission to proceed. In addition, this approval is subject to the agreement of your principal to participate in the study and an indication of support from the Ethics Review Committee at Simon Fraser University.

Support from the Ethics Review Committee is particularly important, given that the subjects are members of your class and therefore are a dependent population. It may be desirable for the purpose of your study to consider the use of a class other than your own since there is a potential bias in your sample. However, that is a matter for you to review with your supervisor for the study.

Once I am in receipt of the letter of request to parents, you may proceed with your study.

Good luck with your project.

Yours truly,

Alan Taylor, Ed.D.
Director of Instruction
Curriculum & Assessment

cc. J. Beck

March 3, 1993

Dear _____:

Thank you for agreeing to let your child participate as a subject in my university research project.

I have enclosed the Informed Consent For Minors form. Please complete it and return it as soon as possible. It will be made clear to each child that they do not have to answer any questions they are uncomfortable with, or offer any information that they do not want to share.

The study will be ongoing from April 1 - June 30, 1993. All participants will have the option of opting out at any time. I will be happy to share the final results with you.

Thank you for your assistance and support.

Sincerely,

Joyce Bodell

Simon Fraser University

INFORMED CONSENT FOR MINORS
AND CAPTIVE AND DEPENDENT POPULATIONS
BY PARENT, GUARDIAN AND/OR OTHER
APPROPRIATE AUTHORITY

Note: The University and those conducting this project subscribe to the ethical conduct of research and to the protection at all times of the interests, comfort, and safety of subjects. This form and the information it contains are given to you to ensure your full understanding of the procedures, risks and benefits involved. Your signature on this form will signify that you have received the document described below regarding this project, that you have received an adequate opportunity to consider the information in the document, and that you voluntarily agree to allow the subject(s) for whom you are responsible to participate in the project.

As (parent/teacher/doctor/etc.) _____
of (name of child/patient/other) _____

I consent to the above-named engaging in the procedures specified in the document titled:

"How can children's narratives inform teaching practice?"

to be carried out in the following place(s): Harbour View Elementary

at the following time(s): April 1 - June 30, 1993

in a research project supervised by: Joyce Bodell

of: Simon Fraser University

I certify that I understand the procedures to be used and have fully explained them to (name of child/patient/other):

In particular, the subject knows the risks involved in taking part. The subject also knows that he/she has the right to withdraw from the project at any time. Any complaint about the experiment may be brought to the chief researcher named above or to Dr. Robin Barrow Dean/Director/Chairman, Education Faculty/School/Department, Simon Fraser University.

I may obtain a copy of the results of this study, upon its completion, by contacting:

Joyce Bodell #7-600 Falcon Drive, Port Moody, B.C. V3H 4E1; 469-8591

NAME (Please print): _____

ADDRESS: _____

SIGNATURE: _____ WITNESS: _____

DATE: _____

Once signed, a copy of this consent form should be provided to you.

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