

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: PILGRIMS AND GUIDES:
A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF
MONTESSORI TEACHERS GUIDING AND BEING
GUIDED BY CHILDREN IN PUBLIC
MONTESSORI SCHOOLS

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This study explores the experiences of public school Montessori teachers. Max van Manen's methodology for hermeneutic phenomenological research provides a framework for the study, and the philosophical writings of Gadamer, Abram, and Levinas guide the textual interpretations. Voices of curriculum theorists, in conversation with Maria Montessori's words, reveal possibilities for understanding the experiences of Montessori public school teachers in the context of contemporary curriculum discourse.

Six public school Montessori teachers engage with the researcher in a series of open-ended conversations. These elementary school teachers work with majority minority student populations in three different urban school districts. They range in age from mid-30s to early 60s, and have between 5 and 33 years of teaching experience in public Montessori schools. Their conversations illuminate the experience of teaching in public Montessori schools in three main themes. The teachers tell of being transformed and drawn-in to a way of life as they take Montessori training. They speak of the

goodness of work that calls children to concentrate their energies and grow into active, caring and responsible people. Finally, they reflect on boundaries of difference encountered in the hallways and meeting places of public schools, and the shadows cast by state tests.

The study suggests a need for Montessori teachers in public schools to participate in open-hearted conversations with parents, non-Montessori educators and administrators about what they are trying to do in their classrooms. It also reveals that decisions made by school administrators have a powerful effect on the ability of Montessorians to create engaging, child-centered learning environments. Finally, the study suggests a need for teachers, administrators, teacher-educators, and policy makers to embrace the questions and possibilities for creative growth inherent in tensions between the conflicting paradigms of adult-driven technical/scientific educational schema and the Montessori developmentally-based teaching style.

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IN PUBLIC MONTESSORI SCHOOLS

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DEDICATION

To my family:

John

Dave

Corinne

And my mother, Isabelle Toliver Gatewood

And in loving memory of my father, Walter Patrick Gatewood

and

Catherine Virginia Massey and John Otis Massey

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CHAPTER ONE: A DIFFERENT POINT OF DEPARTURE

There were two Montessori classrooms at Oak Hill Middle School, tucked away in the furthest corner of a rambling public school building. Our classroom windows looked out onto a field enclosed by tree-blanketed hills; at the field's edge an underground spring surfaced, creating an oasis in the midst of suburban streets for brown-backed geese, soft-eyed deer and lone eagles. The classrooms, too, created a kind of oasis, a protected nook within a large institution. Within their sheltering walls, as a Montessori teacher with adolescent Montessori students, I set out on an inner journey in quest of renewal, inspiration, and insight into what it means to create supportive, responsive, caring classrooms in public schools. In our corner space, my students and I found what Bachelard (1957/1994) calls, "a haven, ... a sure place, ... a place for our being" (p. 137). But when we stepped outside the classroom door we found ourselves immersed in and at times overwhelmed by, a school culture focused more on curriculum guides, test preparation, and grading factors than on care and support of students' growth and development. Powerful public school conceptions of the teacher-student relationship, characterized by vocabularies and routines of accounting and control, pulled me away from attending to the unfolding sensitivities of my students and threatened to sweep me away from my quest for inspiration and renewal.

Like the two classrooms at Oak Hill Middle School, Montessori schools are tucked away in the far corners of teaching traditions in the United States. Thousands of small private schools are sprinkled across the nation, and hundreds of public school systems have Montessori classrooms (NAMTA, 2005). In these schools and classrooms the day is not divided into reading, math and science classes. There are no rows of desks.

Children do not ask permission to leave their seats or speak; they move freely around the classroom, choose work from shelves scattered throughout the room, and converse freely with each other and with their teachers. Twenty-five children might be engaged in twenty-five different activities, sitting alone or in small groups, at tables or on the floor. The teacher provides quiet guidance, gathering small groups for lessons, or moving around the room to work with individual children.

Within the community of Montessorians in the U.S., there are a growing number of teachers like myself who work in Montessori classrooms in public schools. Between 1910 and the late 1960's all Montessori schools in the U.S. were private schools, but over the past forty years a growing number of public school systems have opened Montessori classrooms in magnet and charter schools (Chattin-McNichols, 1992). A push to open Montessori public schools occurred in the late 1970's when courts ordered school systems to initiate voluntary desegregation programs (Wolff, 1998). Public Montessori schools were opened as "Magnet Schools," to attract families to racially diverse schools. In these public schools, originally opened by school systems in hopes of winning federal grants that came with voluntary desegregation efforts, teachers are now charged with organizing learning and managing behavior in order to maximize student achievement.

But the Montessori method of teaching has a very different focus. In Montessori classrooms teachers are seen as guides, whose work is to support and nurture children's natural tendencies to learn. In this study, I explore what Montessori teachers experience as they enter into teaching and learning relationships with young people in public schools. What is the lived experience of Montessori teachers, guiding and being guided by students in Montessori public school classrooms? What is it like for them to dwell in

an in-between space where child-centered pedagogy touches teacher-controlled, data-driven, outcomes-based instruction? What meaning do they take from their lives in public school classrooms? And what guides the guides in their work of nurturing and supporting young people?

A Radical Change

If a child is to be treated differently than he¹ is today, if he is to be saved from the conflicts that endanger his psychic life, a radical change, and one upon which everything else will depend must be made.... The adult claims that he is doing all that he can.... He must therefore have recourse to something that lies beyond his conscious and voluntary knowledge.... The adult must find within himself the still unknown error that prevents him from *seeing the child* as he is. (Montessori, 1936/1992, pp. 13-15)

Montessori calls on adults who would guide and protect children to find a way out of the bewildering forest of adult-child conflicts through “*seeing the child* as he is.” She says the adult “must ... have recourse to something that lies beyond his conscious and voluntary knowledge.” A physician in Italy in the late years of the nineteenth century, Montessori was trained in the traditions of empiricism. She was a scientist. Yet, when her medical career brought her into contact with children, what she observed in those children led her to a nuanced, poetic understanding of what scientific observation might mean to educators. In her work with children Montessori opened herself to intuitive perceptions, and in her narratives of teacher as scientific observer she calls on educators to transform themselves, to become humble, gentle, delicate, non-intrusive, and attentive to hidden, inner forces drawing children toward the work of self-creation. She portrays teacher-scientists as mindful observers:

¹ Montessori refers to persons in the masculine gender, according to the conventions of her time.

When I am in the midst of children I do not think of myself as a scientist, a theoretician. When I am with children I am a nobody, and the greatest privilege that I have when I approach them is being able to forget that I even exist, for this has enabled me to see things that one would miss if one were somebody – little things, simple but very precious truths. (Montessori, 1949/1972, p. 113)

Montessori's poetic call for teachers to become scientific observers who attend to "simple but very precious truths" is not expressed in the technical language of controlled, scientific experimentation that dominates educational research in the U.S. It is more like Dutch human science research described by van Manen (2003), who tells us that between 1900 and 1970 hermeneutic phenomenology became an increasingly important orientation in teacher education in Germany and the Netherlands. Both Montessori's scientific pedagogues and phenomenological researchers strive to move beyond conscious and voluntary knowledge in order to attend directly to lived experience. Mario Montessori describes his mother's method:

The phenomena she witnessed were not due to any educational theory of hers.... She concentrated upon the phenomena and facts.... She always sought to catch the essence of the phenomena which were observed and, if it were possible, to elaborate from them an essential and existentialistic "vision." (1916/2004, p. xi)

Because of the resonance I find between Montessori's research methods and those of phenomenologists, I turn to hermeneutic phenomenology to guide me in exploring questions about the experiences of Montessori public school teachers. In this study, I focus on the inner lives of public school Montessori teachers through interpretive reflection on the language they use to talk about their experiences. What is it like for public school Montessori teachers to guide and be guided by children? What enables them to be open to the hidden, inner life of children and attentive to ways young people

reveal themselves in their individual being and becoming? What stands in the way of that openness and attentiveness?

I begin my inquiry by telling the story of my own questioning journey in search of insight into what it means to guide and be guided by children in public Montessori schools. Gadamer (1960/2003) encourages researchers to explore their own ideas about that which they would study before attempting to move beyond these prior understandings. He says that sensitivity to others requires us to be aware of the likelihood that our own understandings will color what we hear in conversations, and he offers guidance to researchers in their efforts to be fully open to learning about the experiences of others: “The important thing is to be aware of one’s own bias, so that the text can present itself in all its otherness and thus assert its own truth against its own fore-meanings” (pp. 267-269).

Montessori, too, set aside her fore-meanings – her cultural orientation toward childhood and the theoretical constructs she learned in her training as a doctor and an anthropologist – in order to attend directly to the experiences of children. By reflecting on my own experiences and the understandings and questions I bring to this study, I seek to make explicit my orientation to the phenomenon so that I can move beyond my taken-for-granted understandings and focus clearly and directly on the experiences of other teachers.

Call to Pilgrimage

As a young teacher in urban public Montessori classrooms during the 1980’s, the tension of conflicting paradigms brushed lightly against my day-to-day awareness. I first learned what it means to be a Montessori teacher during four years spent teaching in a

small private school housed in an old country barn on a quiet hillside. When I moved to an urban public Montessori classroom, I brought with me a sense of stability that grew out of an orderly progression of familiar routines and ways-of-being-with children learned in those first years. I knew the Montessori teaching path was outside the mainstream of educational traditions. Nevertheless, I felt I knew where I was going and what to expect in my day-to-day life in the classroom. The routines of Montessori classroom life had given me “patience, ... an attentive accompanying of the course of development;” and “hope, ... open for the gift of unforeseeable possibilities” (Bollnow, 1989, pp. 51-52).

Then, in the early 1990’s, school system mandates driven by new statewide tests increasingly intruded on our familiar routines. Analysis of test data came to dominate planning for school-wide activities. Mandatory test preparation sessions took away from my students’ time for independent exploration, and vocabularies of accounting and control gained an urgency that became harder and harder to brush aside. I felt a sense of unease and a need to rethink what I was doing.

After teaching for fourteen years in Montessori public elementary schools, I accepted an opportunity to start a Montessori middle school program at Oak Hill Middle School. Four years later I moved again, into the central office of the school system and also into a doctoral program in curriculum research. After nine years in administrative positions, I have returned to a public Montessori elementary classroom, bringing with me new perspectives gained in my years spent journeying away. The classrooms at Oak Hill were an embarkation point on a kind of pilgrimage in search of understanding. This pilgrimage brought me back to Montessori public elementary schools with new

perspectives on the complexity of the path we travel as Montessori public school teachers.

Although I began learning to be a Montessori teacher 27 years ago, my reflective wondering about what it means to be a Montessori teacher in public schools intensified in the context of my work as a teacher of young adolescent Montessori students at Oak Hill Middle School. In this setting, far from my Montessori colleagues and the young children I knew so well, I found myself feeling a bit lost, and that feeling brought with it a sense of heightened awareness that threw me into a reflective mode. As Heidegger (1953/1996) suggests, the anxiety created by this sense of lostness brought me beyond awareness of everyday concerns, into a questioning of my being as a teacher:

Understanding is brought by *Angst* to being-in-the-world as such.... The impossibility of projecting one-self upon a potentiality-of-being primarily based upon what is taken care of ... means to let the possibility of an authentic potentiality-of-being shine forth.... *Angst* holds the Moment in readiness. (p. 315-316)

The journey I set out on when I entered into the world of young adolescents at Oak Hill Middle School was the beginning of a transformative inner pilgrimage. It was a spiritual journey in search of new perspectives on “the unknown factor that lies hidden in the depths of a child’s soul:”

With a spirit of sacrifice and enthusiasm we must go in search like those who travel to foreign lands.... This is what the adult must do who seeks the unknown factor that lies hidden in the depths of a child’s soul. (Montessori, 1936/1992, p. 15)

The journey has also become a quest for a clearer understanding of what it means for all teachers who struggle to maintain a caring way of being-with students in the face of powerful forces intruding into our public school classrooms with the advent and ascension of state standards and testing.

In Search of a Sacred Place

Montessori calls upon adults who wish to uncover the secrets hidden in the souls of children to, “Go in search like those who travel to foreign lands.” Her call to teachers to travel in search of the soul’s mysteries conjures images of pilgrims, wandering sacred pathways, questing for unexpected and unforeseeable revelations:

I am a pilgrim and you are pilgrims towards an idea. I voyage and you voyage and we unite ourselves together, almost as spiritual pilgrims.... We have been studying the means towards a harmony between the child and the adult; and we have learned many deep things – but there are many more to be learned. (Montessori, as cited in Standing, 1957/1998, p. 77)

The metaphor of pilgrimage guides my inquiry, leading me “toward the original region where language speaks through silence” (van Manen, 2003, p. 49). As Virginia Woolf (1932) tells us, metaphors “give us not the thing itself, but the reverberation and reflection, ... close enough to the original to illustrate it, remote enough to heighten, enlarge, and make splendid” (as cited in van Manen, 2003, p. 49). Drawing on the work of Merleau-Ponty, van Manen finds that phenomenological research requires “an incantative, evocative speaking, a primal telling, wherein we aim to involve the voice in an original singing of the world ... which hearkens back to the silence from which the words emanate, ... the ontological core of our being” (p. 13). By envisioning my experience in the imagery of pilgrimage, I seek to come to a more evocative telling of the experience of teaching in public Montessori schools than I could achieve using simple descriptive language.

A pilgrim, in the earliest sense of the word, is one who comes from foreign parts, a stranger (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 2003). The word derives from the old French words *per*, meaning through, and *ager*, meaning field, country, or land. A pilgrim, then, is a stranger who travels through fields, lands and countries far from home. Pilgrim

especially connotes a traveler in search of a sacred place, one who has chosen to journey out of the taken-for-granted world of everyday routines into unfamiliar landscapes, seeking spiritual change and renewal. In Chaucer's words: "Nature pricks them and their heart engages/Then people long to go on pilgrimage/And palmers long to seek the stranger strands" (Chaucer, 1470/2003, p. 3).

Teachers, in their daily lives, move through landscapes characterized by heart-pricking change. Berman, Hultgren, Lee, Rivkin and Roderick (1991) explore teaching as a transformative journey toward uncovering a "view of curriculum as enhancing being rather than merely imparting knowledge and skills" (p. 3):

In education, we journey together, journey with others who are significant.... Most of the time our journey is sweet; on occasion the journey presents problems and dilemmas.... Brambles and thickets may cover portions of the path. In our journey ... new questions constantly emerge. Answers give rise to fresh questions.... Each life is seen as sacred as persons travel side by side....

Curriculum for being involves a journey on which pilgrims attempt to make sense of their lives.... Teachers are fellow pilgrims ... ever reflecting upon their own assumptions and ever dwelling in questions significant to them, even as they encourage students to dwell in their own questions. (pp. 7-9)

I heard a call to pilgrimage as I sat in my elementary classroom, surrounded by sweet, adventuresome young children. I felt a need for change and renewal in the face of increasing incursions into our community by the culture of scientific measurement. Like Chaucer's 15th century pilgrim narrator, my inner, questioning nature pierced me, my heart engaged, and I longed "to seek the stranger strands," to wander on new pathways, to find unexpected revelations and a renewal of faith. I left behind my familiar homeplace of Montessori elementary traditions and ventured into a world of mysteries and surprises, searching for a quickening of the breath, new horizons, new possibilities, inspiration.

The impulse I felt to stretch toward new possibilities arose from deep within, as though from archetypal images of the lost voyages of ancestors, traveling in search of more fruitful homelands. As I gaze out through doorways and up stairways, I see my pilgrim self beckoning. I hear my pilgrim self in the lingering dissonance leading toward new tonal centers in music. The mark of restless seekers is carried in my very being. My yearning soul knows it dwells within the dust of stars, breathing awareness into elements born in the hearts of stellar furnaces billions of light years across space. My personal journey, shared with others who traverse space and time in linked pathways, is marked by inner pilgrimage, a pilgrimage that carries me into hidden depths within myself.

When we set out on journeys of inward exploration, we quest for understanding of the meaning of our very existence. This is the quest for our Selves, the hero's journey, described by Teilhard de Chardin (1957/2001):

Leaving the zone of everyday occupations and relationships where everything seems clear, I went down into my inmost self, to the deep abyss.... But as I moved further and further from the conventional certainties ... I became aware that I was losing contact with myself. At each step of the descent a new person was disclosed within me of whose name I was no longer sure, and who no longer obeyed me. And when I had to stop my exploration because the path faded from beneath my steps I found a bottomless abyss at my feet, and out of it came – arising I know not whence – the current I dare to call my life. (p. 42)

As I embarked onto the complex and shadowy pathway of my pilgrimage, I found myself, like de Chardin, moving “further from the conventional certainties,” both of my familiar Montessori homeplace and of the teaching traditions of my childhood schools. When the vocabularies of test preparation and data analysis entered through the doors of my classroom, they carried with them embodied memories of early school experiences I had turned away from when I became a Montessori teacher. Ghostly tendrils of remembered schooldays obscured my vision of the students before me. For a time I lost

contact with the identity I had gained as a Montessori elementary teacher. The dissonance between Montessori's ideas about how young people learn and the public school traditions that surrounded us, combined with my own unexamined childhood school experiences, obscured my view of our pathway.

But even as I lost my old sense of self, I also uncovered new ways-of-being within myself, and I learned anew to attend to the emerging selves of my students rather than my assumptions about how they should learn and behave. As I watch other Montessori teachers working with young people in public schools, I wonder what kinds of landmarks guide the steps of these teacher-guides? In what ways might they, too, experience the restlessness of seeking? What might their experiences be like on their journeys into new worlds of possibilities with their students?

A Familiar Homeplace Left Behind

He burst out, as he had done before, crying, "What shall I do to be saved?" Then said the other, ... "Keep that light in your eye, and go up directly thereto."... So I saw in my dream that the man began to run ... crying, Life! Life! (Bunyan, 1678/2003, p. 15)

Like Bunyan's 17th century pilgrim, my dream of pilgrimage first sounded as the call of life – the dynamic life of my two young children. Becoming a mother awakened in me a joyous call to explore new possibilities with them. Memories of my young-mother-days are filled with sweet baby smells, innocent splashing in warm bath waters and sharing of delighted discoveries. I wanted to learn all I could about possibilities for nurturing the eager adventurousness of children, and my explorations led me to the writings of Maria Montessori. Montessori believes, as I do, that human intelligence is a force of nature. She calls on adults to treat children as sacred beings who recreate humanity in each lifetime. Her observations led her to believe that in order to create a

good learning environment it is first necessary to attend carefully to the unfolding personalities of children. She calls upon teachers in her schools to act as guides for students, but she also says that if we are to lead children, we must first seek insight into who they are and who they are becoming.

It was Montessori's words that called me to set out onto the path of teaching. My entry to this path led through a Montessori teacher preparation program, where I learned about the "Montessori Method." Montessori spent 50 years observing children as they engaged in focused exploration. The vast repertoire of lessons and activities she created is part of what Montessori teacher education programs pass on to new preschool and elementary teachers. In the years before state mandated testing began creeping into our classroom, I drew upon these Montessori lessons each day in my elementary classroom in order to inspire my young adventurers to actively explore and joyfully engage with the world. The world of adventuresome six to nine year olds became my familiar homeplace, and for years my dream of pilgrimage faded, replaced by a feeling of peaceful journeying through day-to-day life in the classroom.

Fourteen years later, when the call to inner pilgrimage sounded anew, I set out into middle school carrying with me years of embodied memories that continue to color my understandings of what it means to be a Montessori teacher in public schools. Following Gadamer's advice to researchers, to "be aware of one's own bias, so that the text can present itself in all its otherness" (1960/2003, pp. 267), I explore these embodied understandings about teaching and learning, in order to bring to awareness their presence as I listen to the voices of the teachers in my study.

Joyful Engagement with Work

Mornings in my elementary Montessori classrooms began with greetings, and a period of settling into work. Children moved around the room, pausing to watch the fish or talk to the guinea pig. Soon they took out folders and notebooks, thought about what they'd like to do, and looked around for someone to work with. Within fifteen minutes, most of the class was quietly at work, and I invited the remaining wanderers to a brief lesson. Looking around, I saw children sitting beside white mats on our big blue rug, solving division problems with colorful beads and test tubes; at tables dissecting and reassembling sentences with scissors, colorful circles and black arrows; in the reading corner researching the feeding habits of insects, trying to find the right food for a caterpillar they found outside; on the floor near one long wall, laying out colorful pictures of ancient life forms on a timeline of life on earth; sitting on a cushioned seat near a window writing stories about the flowers we planted for Mother's Day; in the kitchen area baking muffins.

Montessori classrooms are filled with activities that provide opportunities for exploration and movement, leading children toward discoveries about their place in the world. Abram (1996) likens the unfolding of human experience to a spider weaving its web. The spider's genetic inheritance may tell it how to create the silk for its web, and guide it in choosing where to place the web, but "however complex are the inherited 'programs,' patterns, or predispositions, they must still be adapted to the immediate situation in which the spider finds itself" (p. 50). In a similar way children learn to adapt to particular environments and cultures through active exploration and interaction.

I watched for joyful engagement with work in my classroom. I felt the classroom was in balance when I saw children falling into a state of absorption. Montessori

(1916/2002) tells us that helping children concentrate their attention on an activity is the teacher's most elemental responsibility: "It is from the completed cycle of an activity, from methodical concentration, that the child develops equilibrium, elasticity, adaptability, and the resulting power to perform the higher actions" (p. 82). Her description of the teacher's attentive care of children's unfolding concentration as they become absorbed in their work guided my work:

At a certain moment a child becomes intensely interested in some task. This is shown by the expression on his face, his intense concentration.... When a child has succeeded in concentrating upon his work, we must supervise it with scrupulous exactitude ... for no other purpose than that of keeping alive that inner flame on which life depends. (Montessori, 1948/1967, pp. 304-305)

Dewey (1938/1997), like Montessori, finds that the most important thing children learn through an educational experience is enthusiasm for learning:

Collateral learning in the way of formation of enduring attitudes, of likes and dislikes ... are fundamentally what count in the future. The most important attitude that can be formed is that of desire to go on learning.... What avail is it to win prescribed amounts of information ..., if in the process the individual loses his own soul: loses his appreciation of things worthwhile, of the values to which these things are relative; if he loses desire to apply what he has learned and, above all, loses the ability to extract meaning from his future experiences as they occur? (pp. 48-49)

In the classrooms of my familiar homeplace, I measured goodness by observing the joyous engagement of children with their work. The goal of protecting concentration in order to keep alive "that inner flame on which life depends" (Montessori, 1948/1967, pp. 304-305) guided my teaching. I focused my energies on creating an environment in which children could find orientation to their world through repeated engagement with meaningful, self-chosen activities. Repeat from Latin *petere*, means "to go to, to seek" (*Merriam-Webster*, 2003). I worked to create an environment that would invite children to *go to* learning experiences again and again, *to seek* understanding.

Drawing upon the work of Merleau-Ponty, Abram (1996) says that when we focus our attention on something, and respond bodily to it, we come to awareness in an iterative and progressive way:

When my body thus responds to the mute solicitation of another being, that being responds in turn, disclosing to my senses some new aspect or dimension that in turn invites further exploration. By this process my sensing body gradually attunes itself to the style of this other presence – to the *way* of this stone, or tree, or table. (p. 52)

Understandings unfold as we interact bodily with the things in our world. Through activity, I watched my students refine the connection between muscles and minds. As they learned to connect with space and objects, the children also discovered what it means to move responsibly within a community, to feel and show respect for self, others and the environment.

When standards of learning and test preparation mandates gained a foothold in our classroom, the Montessori measure of goodness was pushed aside by calls to keep a count of knowledge gained. My focus was pulled away from attending to children's growing awareness of what it means to move responsibly, to respect self, others and the environment, to engage joyously in work, to become attuned to the *way* of the world. As my attention wavered, my confidence faltered. I could not confidently step onto the path laid out by the standards movement as I lacked faith in its unambiguous definitions of what students should know and be able to do at each grade level. Yet its unrelenting vocabularies filled my ears. And when I could no longer clearly hear the voices of my students, I felt lost.

What is it like for other Montessori public school teachers as they travel on the pathways of the standards movement? How do they experience listening to the vocabularies of test preparation as they also attend to their students' voices? What

meaning do they take from the journey through the maze of grade level learning objectives and test scores?

Opening Worlds

When I gathered students for lessons, I sought to engage their attention, draw them toward an enticing doorway and invite them to explore new worlds. Montessori says that imaginative engagement followed by opportunities for spontaneous repetition and manipulation of materials allows children's discoveries to become part of their broad background of understanding. Engaging children's imagination is central in the Montessori elementary curriculum:

When we propose to introduce the universe to the child, what but the imagination can be of use to us?... The secret of good teaching is to regard the children's intelligence as a fertile field in which seeds may be sown, to grow under the heat of flaming imagination. Our aim therefore is not merely to make the children understand, and still less to force them to memorize, but so to touch their imagination as to enthuse them to their inmost core. We do not want complacent pupils but eager ones. (Montessori, 1948/2003, pp. 10-11)

One afternoon each fall, I called my students to come sit in a circle on the floor on our big blue rug. With great drama, I drew the blinds, bringing the room into dusky shadow. I lit a candle, and told the children they could watch the flame as they sat quietly and listened to a story about how the earth came to be. Their eyes widened, and slowly their energetic little bodies grew calm, as I began to tell the story.

Each part of the Montessori elementary curriculum begins by presenting children with a big picture, followed with diverse ways for them to explore subjects that capture their imaginations. Lessons are meant to excite the imagination of elementary-age children by dramatizing stories of the origin of the universe, beginnings of life on earth, and the progression of human civilization. The stories are meant to create vivid pictures

in the children's minds and to send them off wondering, questioning and exploring in order to fill in the details of the picture. As Lillard (1996) notes, "Only when children seek to answer the questions which they themselves ask, do they commit themselves to the hard work of finding answers that are meaningful to them" (pp. 59-60).

Bachelard, too, finds that "Enduring interest should begin with the original amazement of a naïve observer" (1957/1994, p. 107). The Montessori elementary curriculum offers children a narrative to guide and inspire their work of self-creation. One part of the second Great Lesson, "The Coming of Life" (Montessori, n.d.), uses shells metaphorically, to present to children an ideal of service to community. The story begins:

The earth was a beautiful little pearl lit up by her mother, the sun. The sun could not stop looking at it. It looked day and night. One day the sun saw something was not quite in order. Something was beginning to happen. There was trouble!... There were lots of storms and water pounding on the rocks breaking them down more and more. The sea was becoming full of the mineral salts. The land was being washed away. It looked like the order that had been created was beginning to be lost! Who was causing this? Who was the culprit? (pp. 1-2)

The Sun talks with Water, Air and Rocks, looking for the cause of the problem, but learns that though each of these beings is doing its job, the problem continued!

No one wanted to be blamed, but the trouble just got worse and worse.... Everything was acting just the way it should, following its own laws, and yet the beautiful order was being threatened. Soon the earth would no longer be a beautiful pearl in space. Something had to be done. But what could be done?

A wonderful thing happened! Something new was created.... These tiny particles were given a gift that would save the earth.... The tiny particles of life began to eat and eat and eat, and they began to clean up the sea by eating the mineral salts in the water. From the mineral salts some built shells around their bodies for protection. When they died, their shells dropped to the floor of the sea with the salts trapped in them. (Montessori, n.d., pp. 2-3)

And so the earth returns to balance. As the “Story of the Coming of Life” unfolds, the children learn that each being in the cosmos prepares the environment for those who come after, each working in harmony with all other beings. The Great Lessons focus the light of children’s imaginative capacities upon each other and their world. As Bachelard (1957/1994) says, imaginative musings can bring us closer to a fundamental experience of a phenomenon, and illuminate aspects of the human condition: “With a single poetic detail, the imagination confronts us with a new world. From then on, the detail takes precedence over the panorama, and a simple image, if it is new, will open up an entire world” (p. 134).

I saw such an opening of a world in the daily ritual of one intensely energetic seven year old girl in my elementary classroom, who found a moment of repose each day by slowly turning our big globe, tracing the route of an imaginary journey, whispering names of the bays and gulfs and peninsulas and isthmuses she would visit one day. The year before she sat with a group of other six year olds and created clay models of islands/lakes, isthmuses/straits and peninsulas/bays. The next day, and for several days afterwards, she spontaneously recreated these land and water forms in the playground sand. Throughout this year she drew and labeled dozens of maps, and independently researched countries and regions throughout the world.

Over time, I learned the art of guiding my students toward imaginative engagement with the world. But state standards of learning asked me to keep count of students’ acquisition of a preordained body of knowledge. I could not smoothly shift between teaching facts and touching imaginations. The routines of our lives together were disrupted. Rather than guiding students to weave their own emerging

understandings into the fabric of their lives, I found myself thinking of ways to drill facts and skills into their heads.

I wonder what other Montessori public school teachers experience as test preparation and accountability to state standards enter their classrooms? What is it like for them to try to account for knowledge gained, and at the same time work to enthuse their students “to the their inmost core?”

The Color of Sounds

My students and I created joyful, exuberant, focused and talkative classrooms. Every day my elementary Montessori class came together to sit in a circle on our big rug. I remember thousands of these community circles with a hundred little faces and squirming bodies, talking about dogs and knock-knock jokes and wars and dinosaurs and “somebody-pushed-me” and wants and needs and excitement and sleepiness and joy and aggravation. Communication through language allowed my young explorers to learn how to cooperate with others, discover the wisdom of the past and find ways to make their contributions to humanity. Students and I conversed daily about their plans as I helped them focus on goals; I chatted with students about their enthusiasms and joys, their frustrations and anxieties. Students talked with each other. They conferred with each other about their work, and spontaneously collaborated on projects. Older children helped younger children. I perceived a quiet hum of conversation to be a sign of a healthy classroom.

Douglas Barnes (1975/1992) delves into the contribution conversing makes to learning in classrooms. He finds that children who engage in conversation about learning are constructing understanding: “The desire to communicate with others plays a dynamic part in the organizing of knowledge” (p. 91). He quotes G. H. Mead:

I know of no way in which intelligence or mind could arise ... other than through the internalization by the individual of social processes of experience and behavior.... as made possible by the individual's taking the attitudes of other individuals toward himself and toward what is being thought about. (p. 91)

I listened for a buzz of quiet conversation, punctuated by noisy bursts of enthusiasm. I carefully guarded children's concentration as I guided them toward focused engagement with formative work, but I also reminded myself to be respectful of the exuberance that arises from children's energetic drive toward independence. Bachelard tells us, "Sounds lend color to space" (1957/1994, p. 45). I listened attentively to the "color" of the sounds in my classrooms; quiet, focused conversation told me the children had found orientation, and were on a path toward self-creation through "the kind of work that ... gives order to a person's life and opens up to it infinite possibilities of growth" (Montessori, 1948/1967, p. 305). Immersed in the culture of accountability, what are the sounds other public school Montessori teachers listen for? In what ways does an expectation that teachers should control, manage and assess student behavior change what they listen for in the color of sounds in their classrooms?

Our talkative, joyous, exuberant classroom was supported by a Montessori culture that envisions teachers as guides and young people as adventurous explorers. As pressure from state mandated tests grew in our public school classroom, a time came when I wasn't always confident enough to leave charted timelines of curriculum standards and reach out to a child needing individual assistance. It became difficult to step aside and let enthusiasm reign when my students became genuinely and deeply engaged with a project. Montessori teaching practices are based on a belief that students' opening awareness of the world arises both from their own natural tendencies, and from the work they spontaneously choose. As requirements to "cover" curriculum in a timely manner gained

force, my attention was drawn away from attending to signs that students were finding work that connected an opening awareness of their place in the world with their inner resources.

A Renewed Call to Pilgrimage

When covering the curriculum dominated my attention and my focus was pulled away from the hidden worlds of the children, I felt their resistance to work grow. When I imposed work that did not contribute to their work of self-creation, we lost something of the trust we felt in each other. We were drawn into a paradigm of teacher using power over students in order to move them into routines of control and accountability. Neither the paradigm arising from Montessori's words nor that reproduced by teaching practices within public schools sat easily together in our classroom. In the daily bump and grind, instability grew. Cracks developed. Sparks flew. I felt the lively joyousness seeping away from our days.

Every day during this time I experienced possibilities of mutation, loss and re-formation of my identity. I felt overwhelmed by expectations that student learning can and should be controlled by a teacher. At the same time, there arose within me a sense of needing to maintain boundaries of difference between myself and public school culture. I did not want to lose my identity as a Montessori teacher. Stuart Hall (1997) develops the idea that shared meanings can provide a supportive sense of belonging:

The production and the exchange of meanings ... is what gives us a sense of our own identity, of who we are and with whom we 'belong' – so it is ... used to mark out and maintain identity within and difference between groups. (pp. 2-3)

Montessorians share a faith in the inner drive of children to seek understanding of their place in the world. This is a part of what makes us feel like Montessorians. But

where does faith in children's quest for self understanding and personal growth fit into a curriculum plan handed down from the state and tested four times a year? As boundaries of meaning were breached time and time again, I felt a need for change and for renewal of faith. An urge to escape came upon me, a desire to run like Bunyan's pilgrim, crying, "What shall I do to be saved?" I left behind my familiar homeplace, the elementary Montessori classroom, and set out on pilgrimage.

Embarkation: Pilgrimage Beginnings

I set out into the world of middle school with almost casual enthusiasm. At first I felt a little unsettled by the sensation of entering unfamiliar territories, yet I believed Montessori's philosophical grounding and my years of teaching experiences provided me with a trusty roadmap. I measured experiences in middle school against memories of my elementary Montessori classrooms. I watched for joyous exploration and a concentration of energies on the activities we shared. I strove to approach students with respect. I searched for ways to provide opportunities for them to choose work and follow their own interests. I listened for signs that they were helping each other build understandings of the world within a community of respect.

Very soon, however, I felt as though I had stepped off my trusty map, into a confusing world of long shadows and unexpected turns. I found it difficult to provide opportunities for students to move spontaneously, interact bodily with the environment and repeat activities because I was immersed in the more traditional paradigm of quiet seat work, prevalent in all the classrooms around me. Imaginative musings gave way to content-driven curriculum timetables. Textbooks, teacher's editions, statements about what, when and where students should learn crowded into my consciousness, pulling me

even further away from the teacher I had become, threatening to build immovable barriers between myself and the children. The color of sounds, too, was quite different. In the hallways students were explosively noisy; in surrounding classrooms quiet was punctuated only by covert rhythms of pencils drumming, toes tapping, fingers fidgeting, whispered confidences. The measure of goodness was taken through an accounting of work completed, homework turned in, test scores and quiz scores and project rubrics.

I felt as though I had stepped off my trusty map into an unknowable terrain. The way-of-being-with-children I had learned as a Montessori elementary teacher was no longer a clear guide. The few texts from Dr. Montessori about young adolescents placed them in a country school with all their academic experiences connected with farm activities so that they could understand humankind's agrarian roots. The school district I worked within called for a set curriculum derived from national and state standards. A confusion of voices sounded between my heart, my hands and my ears – memories of my own adolescence, all that my Montessori elementary teacher-trainers had passed on to me, voices from what I read about ideal Montessori adolescent programs, demands of the subject matter I was supposed to transmit, parents' anxieties about their children, my own felt need to be a "good Montessori teacher."

My pilgrimage in search of renewed faith led me deep into shadowlands. Lessons "lessened" as Jardine, Clifford and Friesen say:

Under the logic of basics-as-breakdown, each task we face in classrooms involves a lesson (or ... a "lessen") organized around an apparently isolated curricular fragment. There is no time to deepen our understanding of or dwell upon any one fragment. There is no urge to slow things down and open them up, because there is simply so much else to get done and so little time. (2003, p. 12)

My students and I had to re-member shared ways-of-being when we left behind our familiar homeplace of Montessori teaching traditions to create a public Montessori middle school. I strove to be guided by Montessori's call to teachers to create learning environments that support students' work of self-creation:

The whole life of the adolescent should be organized in such a way that it will enable him when the time comes to make a triumphal entry into social life – not entering it debilitated, isolated, or humiliated, but with head high, sure of himself. Success in life depends on a self-confidence born of a true knowledge of one's own capacities; combined with many-sided powers of adaptation – in fact on what we have called 'valorization of personality.' (as cited in Standing, 1957/1998, pp. 117-118)

The ideal of creating an environment that frees young people to discover their "own capacities, combined with many-sided powers of adaptation" was always in my mind.

But the routines of traditional school culture concealed from me the essential spirit of my students at times, intruding on our classroom in the form of schedules, curriculum frameworks, grading and testing.

The ideal of supporting the life force driving the growth and learning of these young people continually projected into my consciousness, though, opening awareness of the work of the adolescent, and unconcealing – revealing the importance of a moment, an interaction, or a smile. Being forced off the map of familiar ways-of-being brought me into an open region, where an electrifying attentiveness enabled me to see my students anew. Wandering in the wilderness, I at last found the renewal and inspiration I had yearned to find. I found my footing as I learned again to attend reflectively and receptively to those spontaneous, self-creating activities that connect the hidden, inner worlds of children to their environment. The lived experience of being in caring relationships opened up possibilities of tapping what Mary Atwell Doll (2000) calls, "this

intense current within, that which courses through the inner person, that which electrifies or gives life to a person's energy source" (p. xii).

Guiding and Being Guided: What Does It Mean to Follow the Child?

When I left behind my familiar Montessori elementary school homeplace to explore the unknown territories of middle school, I brought with me an underlying faith in the foundational ideal of Montessorians: "Follow the Child." Teacher-guides, Montessori tells us, should be guided by the child's inner life: "The child himself ... the mysterious will that directs his formation – this must be our guide" (Montessori, 1946/1989, p. 16). When Montessori teachers speak of following the child, what we are referring to is Montessori's advice to attend to the inner life of children as it is revealed when they engage their full attention on an activity. Following the child requires becoming very familiar with children, and trusting their developmental sensitivities; and it requires being able to distinguish between inborn tendencies, and acculturated habits. In middle school, I had to discover anew where I stood in relation to my students, on their own terms.

Montessori calls upon teacher-guides to examine the ways their interactions with children shape or distort or enrich their spirits:

The first duty of the educator... is to recognize the human personality of the young being and respect it ... Only thus can he give the child all the help that is necessary, ... not erase the designs the child makes in the soft wax of his inner life. (Montessori, 1945/1970, pp. 51-57)

How does a teacher "recognize the human personality" of her students? Casey's description of bonding between person and nature in wild places resonates with the sense of connection that can grow between teacher and learner, making it possible for teachers to recognize and respect the personalities and inner lives of their students:

Between the reader of nature and the nature he reads, between welcoming and being welcomed, between witnessing and being witnessed, there is a profound sympathy.... The strangeness of a wild place disappears not just because I have become familiar with it but because I realize that I am bonded to it – and it to me. (Casey, 1993, p. 246)

Between teacher and student, too, there grows a sense of welcoming and being welcomed, a feeling of witnessing and being witnessed, a profound sympathy. The strangeness of being in a teaching/learning relationship disappears when we become familiar with one another and realize there is a bond between us. This is part of what it means to be guided by students as we seek ways to guide them. Casey further develops the meaning of guiding and being guided: “What guides the guide, then is ... a matter of *local knowledge* based on an extreme sensitivity to precise features of the vicinity” (1993, pp. 251-252).

In its earliest sense, the word ‘guide’ names one who leads or shows the way, especially to a traveler in a strange country; later it came to mean one who directs a person in his ways or conduct. It can also refer to something that serves to steady or direct motion or to guide the eye (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 2003). Casey explores what it is like to be guided in a confusing wilderness area:

To be guided is ... to be led by something or someone else. The something is ultimately the natural world, its particular configuration, the lay of the land. But short of this (and just because the land’s lay may not be evident or may be quite confusing), human beings rely on intermediary presences. One such intermediary is the map; another is the local guide, the someone else who knows the way. (1993, p. 250)

As I sought re-orientation in the confusing world of middle school, knowledge of child development offered a kind of “map.” Curriculum documents seemed, at first, to be possible “maps.” But even the Montessori elementary curriculum – which provides time-tested plans for rich and engaging lessons based on a comprehensive, coherent theory –

can fail. There are times in classrooms when even the very best of curriculum guides provides inadequate guidance for the teacher-guide, and feelings of being overwhelmed and lost arise. When a child is anxious or irritable, or excitement is running too high, or every pair of eyes in the room looks glazed over, the curriculum “map” may not help at all.

As an elementary teacher, my colleagues often filled the role of “local guide” at those times when my Montessori map of childhood territories failed. When I first moved to middle school I had no Montessori colleagues. For me, time with the children, re-awakened sensitivity, and an accumulation of experiences were necessary before I could develop the intuitive awareness needed to learn the lay of the land. Time and an accumulation of experiences brought familiarity with the territory of adolescence. And this familiarity enabled me, at last, to be guided by attending to my students as I guided them in their work of self-creation.

I wonder what steadies the motion and guides the eye of Montessori teacher-guides as they traverse the pathways of public schools. What are the markers they use to discover the “lay of the land” in the shadowy in-between world of Montessori public school classrooms? In what ways do they weave the ideal of “following the child” into the texture of everyday work in their classrooms?

Into the Shadowlands: Foregrounding of the Question and Research Methodology

In a preliminary exploration of my phenomenon, I ask two public Montessori public middle school teachers, Donna and Meg (pseudonyms) the questions: “Can you think of a time this year when you felt the Montessori aspect of the program was really coming together? Can you describe what it was like, from your point of view? What was

happening in the classroom?” Both teachers were Montessori elementary teachers for years before becoming public Montessori middle school teachers.

These teachers feel most successful as Montessorians when students use them as “another resource in the classroom as opposed to the main implementer,” and when they can allow students “to just develop.” For them, being creative means stepping outside the school district’s mandated scheduling and curriculum guides. Although they feel a strong sense that they are responsible for seeing that students work on state standards, they also express reluctance to interrupt students’ concentration on their own choices of learning activities. Meg asks:

How do you pull three or four over here to work on this domain when ... they may not want to be working on their math at that time. And they may be focused with a group that’s working on social studies.

A sense of being responsible for “covering” curriculum, leads to a feeling they might not be allowing time for other important developmental needs. As Donna says:

I have been negligent about making sure that I meet as a group with the children to talk about their social issues or concerns. And I opened it up today and I realized that – there was a flood.... They missed the opportunity and I realized that I haven’t been giving them that opportunity before. So I just have to be more cognizant ... about what their needs are really, you know?

Both teachers want to provide time for students to explore personal interests and learn deeply from lessons, but also feel a need to keep them moving through the curriculum.

Donna talks about the tension she experiences:

You feel you haven’t done a complete lesson, a presentation, you know, and you don’t want to let them go, to rob them of the whole experience.... It’s the whole balance.

Meg, too, experiences tension in trying to balance her sense of needing to cover curriculum with her sense that students want and need uninterrupted time to follow their own interests:

The thing I'm finding is that they have trouble changing gears. They still need some encouragement to: "Okay you've been on science all day long for a day and a half and you do have a certain amount of other topics you have to cover!" So the guidance now is saying, "We need to remind you [these are] the things you need to accomplish."

Both teachers express a tension between feeling responsible for preparing students for state tests and trying to create a Montessori environment. Donna says:

I find that for myself it's such an obstacle, number one this pressure, number two the extent of the curriculum.... I don't see how it can work, is really what it is. It's not that I'm not open to it, it's like how, how?

And Meg immediately and fervently echoes her words: "Yeah! How? How? You know?"

The question "How?" resonates strongly with these two teachers, as it does for me. It is a resoundingly complex and impenetrable question. In this study, I explore what it means to be a Montessori teacher in public schools. **What is the lived experience of Montessori teachers, guiding and being guided by students in public schools?**

I have chosen hermeneutic phenomenology as my research methodology because of the resonance I find between Montessori's call for attentive awareness of children, and the experiential wakefulness phenomenologists seek. Phenomenology derives from two Greek words: '*phenomenon*,' meaning something that shows itself, and '*logos*,' meaning word, speech, discourse or reason (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 2003). Heidegger further interprets *logos* to mean speech that enables the speaker's audience to "see" what is being talked about (1953/1996, p. 28). Phenomenological researchers, then, attend to the way we reason and speak about what we experience in order to uncover aspects of a phenomenon that may be hidden in the course of day-to-day routines and vocabularies.

We purposefully move outside the realm of scientific discourse, beyond the limits imposed by analytical thinking, into a more poetic expressiveness that aspires to speak to human experience in a way that makes that which we perceive and experience truly visible to others. As van Manen (2003) says, phenomenology “attempts to gain insightful descriptions of the way we experience the world pre-reflectively, without taxonomizing, classifying, or abstracting it” (p. 9). He describes six interwoven pathways hermeneutic phenomenological research follows in the search for understanding of human experience:

- (1) turning to a phenomenon which seriously interests us and commits us to the world;
- (2) investigating experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualize it;
- (3) reflecting on the essential themes which characterize the phenomenon;
- (4) describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting;
- (5) maintaining a strong and oriented pedagogical relation to the phenomenon;
- (6) balancing the research context by considering parts and whole. (pp. 30-31)

Following these pathways as I research the lived experience of being a public school Montessori teacher means beginning, as I have done in Chapter One, by reflecting on my own experiences with and orientation to the phenomenon. I reflect on my own experiences in order to interrogate my preconceptions about what it means to teach and learn in Montessori public schools. Then, in Chapter Two I explore accounts others have written that touch on the lived experiences of Montessori public school teacher-guides. This begins a process of moving beyond the boundaries of my own perceptions into conceptual clearings where I can be receptive to understanding the existential horizons of other teachers. Next, in conversations with teachers, I listen deeply for particulars of their situated, embodied lived experiences. Having gathered accounts, I try to see with fresh

eyes as I engage reflectively and interpretively with themes revealed in their descriptions of their lived experiences. I write and rewrite until I find ways to share my understanding of essential themes that characterize the meanings of the experiences. Because my questions are pedagogical in nature, my phenomenological research is focused on uncovering the pedagogical implications of the phenomenon of guiding and being guided by students in Montessori public schools. The sixth pathway, balancing the research context by considering parts and wholes, is a path that continuously moves between views of the phenomenon from within, views of it from broader perspectives, and detailed views that reveal nuances of experience; on the sixth pathway the research moves toward a unity that transcends the parts.

Heidegger (1953/1996) poetically describes the phenomenologist's goal of being attentively receptive as letting "what shows itself be seen from itself" (p. 30). He urges us to engage ourselves with moments of opening awareness:

To let be – that is, to let beings be as the beings which they are – means to engage oneself with the open region ... into which every being comes to stand, bringing that openness, as it were, along with itself. (Heidegger, 1993c, pp. 125-127)

Montessori, too, calls on teacher-researchers to cultivate receptive openness that attends directly to the experiences of children. She tells teachers to watch for moments that reveal the inner life of children, when it seems "as if a road had opened up within their souls that led to all their latent powers, revealing the better part of themselves" (1945/1970, p. 73).

This first chapter has been an effort to reveal the context of my pre-understandings of the pilgrimage undertaken by Montessori teachers who guide students in public schools as they watch for moments that reveal the inner lives of children. In

exploring these pre-understandings, I have uncovered many layers of questions about the experience. A deeper exploration of these questions is offered in Chapter Two, as I look to the writings of Montessori, curriculum theorists, Montessori public school teachers and others who have engaged in reflective interpretation of the experience of working in public schools.

In Chapter Three I describe my understandings of how hermeneutic phenomenology can help illuminate the meanings of teaching experiences for Montessorians working in public schools. In Chapters Four, Five and Six, I uncover themes that appear in the stories of six Montessori public school teachers as they converse with me about their shared journeys with students, and describe what it is like for them to orient themselves both to the unfolding personalities of their students and to the technical/scientific paradigm that dominates public schools. In Chapter Seven I examine broader implications of the experiences of these Montessori public school teachers as they illuminate tensions and possibilities for teaching and learning in Montessori public schools.

CHAPTER TWO: INTO THE IN-BETWEEN

Tensions and Possibilities: Finding Orientation in the Zone-of-Between

When I left behind my familiar homeplace of Montessori elementary classrooms and embarked on a pilgrimage through the world of public middle schools, I carried with me a trusty roadmap that had served me well for many years. The paths on my road map were traced out by lived experiences in the company of children, and illuminated by an abiding appreciation of Montessori's insights and a degree of pedagogical wisdom learned in the company of Montessori teacher-colleagues. Yet, when I crossed into the strange lands of public middle schools, I felt as though I had stepped off the map into an unknowable terrain where the familiar dropped away. I found myself in an in-between space, a place of tensions and possibilities. In this in-between space my students and I traversed an unsettling terrain characterized by competing images of teaching and childhood.

In middle school the ways-of-being-with students I had taken for granted dropped away unexpectedly, leaving me adrift. The early meaning of the word middle resonates with my uneasy search for landmarks when I stepped off my trusty map. Middle, from early Scandinavian *mid* has come to mean between, but in its earliest usage the word middle evokes the experience of being at sea and navigating by setting a course between two landmarks on shore (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 2003). At sea, landmarks are elusive. There is only water and sky and perhaps a distant impression of landscape. In middle school, too, landmarks eluded me. Without the familiar routines of Montessori elementary classrooms, I lost my bearings. I stood in the midst of competing horizons,

seeking landmarks that could guide me in my relationships with my students. Inspiration and renewal eluded me at first.

The sense of being lost was especially strong when we stepped outside the sheltering walls of our classroom, into the hallways of a public school whose culture focused on transmission of knowledge and control of student behavior. Our teaching and learning relationships grew within a space in which I felt pulled between a call to be guided by attunement to my young friends and relentless requests to respond to the school system's routines of scientific measurement. Tensions created by the pull of competing understandings brought an attentive state that revealed new possibilities of being, even in the depths of shadows. After a few months of uncertainty and anxiety I began to find my way back onto familiar pathways, but the familiar was changed as I experienced an electric state of attentiveness brought on by the sense of being lost.

I learned anew what it means to "follow the child," to seek understanding by attending carefully to those moments when something opens up "within their souls ... revealing the better part of themselves" (Montessori, 1945/1970, p. 73). Caring relationships grew from the seeds of attentive interactions, and I found orientation through these caring relationships. Each student became important in my life, as I learned to listen to who these young people were and to watch for signs of who they were becoming.

I was inspired by the words of Montessori. Envisioning myself as a teacher-guide, I was drawn to reinterpret her words to help me understand the vocabularies and routines of the school system. But I also experienced my role as teacher-planner, implementer and assessor. I dwelt in a tensioned place that Aoki (2005h) names "the zone of between." He

finds productive tension in the zone between curriculum-as-plan and curriculum-as-lived-experience:

To be alive is to live in tension; ... in fact, it is the tensionality that allows good thoughts and actions to arise when properly tensioned chords are struck.... Tensionless strings are not only unable to give voice to songs, but also unable to allow a song to be sung. (p. 162)

Dwelling in tension between competing horizons can create what Reynolds (2003), drawing on the work of Deleuze, calls “lines of flight.” According to Deleuze, a line of flight is, “the least perceptible of all things. And yet it’s along this line of flight that things come to pass, becomings evolve, revolutions take shape.... Power lies on the border” (as cited in Reynolds, 2003, p. 95). Aoki, too, explores (2005b) movement that happens within in-between zones:

Language of “both this and that, and more” is a tensioned place that could vibrate in difference. It need not be a closed place but a place open to many possibilities. It is a place where new lines of thought can spring forth, running in many directions simultaneously. As such, it is a fertile place. (p. 299)

And he tells us that “In generative third spaces earth’s rhythms can be heard, at times in thunderous rolls and at other times in fingertip whispers” (Aoki, 2005g, p. 423). For Deleuze, Reynolds and Aoki, lines of flight arising within in-between places are directions of becoming that cannot be mapped in two-dimensional, either-or ways.

Off the map, I found orientation in the tension of our middle school space through a process of moving freely, off predictable, well-marked pathways, between water and sky, between known horizons. I wound my way between and amongst the beings of my students, memories of our years together in elementary school, the public school discourse of measurement and control, Montessori’s poetic imagery and my own re-

membered childhood school experiences. As in a labyrinth, I wound toward an open space in the middle that revealed possibilities of relationships and connections.

In this chapter I set out to explore “lines of flight” that might mark the experience of Montessori teachers in the in-between place created when Montessori classrooms are set within public schools. What might it mean to teachers to live in the midst of divergent representations of teaching and learning in Montessori public schools? What is the power and meaning of dwelling in such in-between spaces?

Between Guiding and Controlling

The images of teaching Montessorians bring to public school Montessori classrooms arise from stories in Montessori’s published works, passed on from one generation of Montessorians to the next in teacher preparation programs and practicum experiences. A recurring image in these texts is of the teacher as guide on an adventurous journey toward self-creation. Montessori teacher-guides are called upon to embrace the transformative experience of supporting, nurturing and empowering the children in their charge. Images of teachers encountered in public school routines and vocabularies are quite different. Here we see educators planning content coverage, measuring achievement, and managing behavior.

Seth Kreisberg (1992) examines traditional student-teacher relationships in teacher controlled classrooms. Drawing on the work of Paolo Freire, he finds that linear and hierarchical structures of classrooms reflect and reinforce forms of power relations in which the teacher has power over the students. Desks lined up, facing front toward the teacher’s desk, time constrained by factory-like divisions of time, and language such as ‘time on task,’ embody the idea of technical force driven by teacher over student, in an

effort to produce predictable and controlled/controllable behaviors. Freire says children are represented in traditional school settings as bank accounts in which we deposit knowledge, to be stored for later use:

Students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiqués and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat.... The scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing the deposits. (Freire, 1993, p. 72)

Kreisberg finds that our culture often uses language of control, and that the prevalence of this language generates a common sense view of reality that “seeps deep within our personalities, into the depths of our unconscious, shaping our personalities, needs, and desires” (Kreisberg, 1992, p. 16). This “common sense” view of education as a controlling force effects public school teachers when they are confronted with expectations that lessons be based on state-determined learning outcomes or directives on the pacing of curriculum transmission, when their students are tested to measure acquisition of knowledge and skills and when faculty meetings focus on data analysis and the raising of test scores.

Kreisberg’s call to teachers to struggle with their common sense notions of what schools should be like is a call to inner pilgrimage:

What we know from our experience is teacher-dominated teaching. Teachers talk a lot; teachers control students; teachers transmit knowledge.... Teachers have power. Students do not. Learning can be boring, disconnected, alienating....

But our experience is also one of our greatest assets if we reflect on our experience critically – if we in fact commit ourselves to *unlearning* our experience of what it means to be a teacher in this culture so that we can *relearn* what it means to be a teacher. (Kreisberg, 1992, pp. 198-199)

What is it like for Montessorians working with children in public school settings when the ideal of teacher-as-transformative guide meets dissonant representations of

teaching? In what ways do they feel re-committed to “*unlearning* ... what it means to be a teacher in this culture so that we can *relearn* what it means to be a teacher?”

Running the Course of the Inner Coursing

Mary Aswell Doll (2000) echoes Kreisberg’s thought that if we wish to live in an awakened and responsible way with young people, we must attend to the powerful voice of our own childhood experiences. She urges us to attend to those things we turn away from, those currents in our lives we want to ignore:

We cannot afford to resist our ignorances; we cannot afford not to know. We cannot, because not to know about our own resistances is to renege our responsibility to be human in an awakened way ... To run the course of the inner coursing is curriculum’s most urgent call. (p. 217)

Montessori teachers are told in their teacher preparation courses to focus their energies on creating developmentally responsive environments that support students’ self-creating quests. But is it possible to guide students in their voyages of self-discovery without attending first to the taken-for-granted understandings that shape our teaching and learning relationships? The children’s journeys of self-discovery coexist in Montessori schools with inner pilgrimages of the teacher. Integrity of the learning environment seems to lie in a complex interplay between teacher guiding students and teacher being guided by students.

The challenge offered to teachers by Kreisberg and Doll resonates with the struggle I experienced, as a sense of being lost pushed me to examine reflectively what I was doing in my work with young adolescents. When we come to the point of entering with our students “the open region and its openness into which every being comes to stand” (Heidegger, 1993c, p. 125), we bring with us all that we have been. We can turn our back on it, or we can seek to make it part of our new understandings. Only as I turned

to look directly at my own past experiences, seen reflected in the experiences of my students, could I begin to shed some of the heavy weight of educational traditions that shaped my childhood school experiences. In middle school, standing in the shadow of these childhood experiences, I had to unlearn, then relearn, what it means to be a Montessori teacher.

Casey's description of the experience of entering a building mirrors the sense of edgy energy I felt as I relearned in middle school what it means to be a Montessori teacher-guide:

Besides the ... central structure or "building" proper, there is the by-work of indirect approach and indirect knowledge. We designate these subtle but effective structures by such prepositions as *around*, *alongside*, *with*, *between*, *inside* and *outside*. These modes are *pre-positional* in character. They specify forms of relating to built places *before* ... settled stances are taken up. (1993, pp. 122-123)

Off the map, I found my way by moving on barely discernible pathways that wandered through remembered routines of elementary Montessori classrooms, embodied memories of my own childhood school experiences, discordant vocabularies of measurement and control, Montessori's poetic imagery and the emerging selves of my students. A time of approaching indirectly, learning through subtle resonances, opened up possibilities of understanding that issued, as Jardine (1998) suggests, "up out of the Earth we actually walk, the life we actually *find* ourselves living. This school, this classroom, this moment with this child" (p. 101).

What is it like for other Montessori public school teachers, forming, re-forming and defending their own teaching identities, positioning themselves beside, around and outside of their students who are also seeking orientation before moving into newly forming identities? What might make it possible for them to learn about their own

resistances? What experiences might encourage them to search for new ways of “*unlearning* our experience of what it means to be a teacher in this culture so that we can *relearn* what it means to be a teacher?”

A Sliding Landscape

Aoki (2005i) explores tension in the field of curriculum research as three different ideals of teaching practices meet:

In the world of curriculum over the years we have slid about, and today we now slide about, from center to center – the teacher as center, the subject/discipline as center, the child as center. Such talk of competing curriculum centers flows from a landscape populated by identifiable entities that stand as discrete units: the school subject, the teacher, and the child ... each having a solid identity of its own. (p. 281)

He finds creative possibilities in moving between and among these competing discourses:

Life in the classroom is not so much *in* the child, *in* the teacher, *in* the subject; life is lived in the spaces between and among.... We ought to *decenter* them *without erasing them*.... We might begin to be more alert to where we are when we say “a child is interested” or “a teacher is interested.” “Interest” comes from “*inter/esse*” (*esse* – to be), being in the “inter.” So “to be interested” is to be in the intertextual spaces of interfaces, the places where “and” is ... a place of difference, where something different can happen or be created, where whatever is created comes through as a voice that grows in the middle. (p. 282)

I recall sensations of frustration, anger, discouragement and confusion as I lived in the tension between acting as transformational guide in a child-centered Montessori classroom and transmitting adult-chosen subject matter on a controlled timetable in the world of traditional school culture. I hear my frustration echoed in the words of my teacher-friend: “It’s such an obstacle, ... number one this pressure, number two the extent of the curriculum.... I don’t see how it can work.... It’s not that I’m not open to it, it’s like how, how?”

Keith Boehme and Elizabeth Wymer, both teachers in a public Montessori school in Ohio, seek insight into the meaning of the sliding landscape of Montessori public schools. They begin by exploring the words of Sofia Cavalletti, “Education brings the child to a window opening out onto the infinite and invites him or her to gaze on ever-expanding horizons” (as cited in Boehme & Wymer, 2004, p. 109). Boehme and Wymer, looking at results of a survey of their fellow Montessori public school teachers, find that state tests inhibit their ability to bring children to awareness of expansive horizons. They find “difficulty in tying in subject areas to a bigger picture” as “one half of the research time, during which children could follow their personal interests had been eliminated” (p. 112). Fellow teachers they surveyed found that rubrics and tests diminished the vision of child as learner. Textbooks appeared in place of hands-on materials and, “There was no place for children to hang their intellectual hooks and thus obtain a vision” (p. 114). They sound a note of despair: “Our school community made many attempts to help us refocus. However, the vision of education that Montessori and Cavalletti place before us ... is now quite dim” (p. 115).

Our public school was caught between two fundamentally different visions of education, which are in opposition.... The standards-based model is ... developed by committees overseen by state agencies. Achievement on tests is the goal of this model.... In Cosmic Education, natural action follows a vision of what the world is like in all its complexity.... Awareness and full participation in a grand plan are the chief goals of this model....

Some children do score “naturally” well on the state tests. However, ... doing well is often accomplished at the expense of a loss of imagination, integration, and reflection. (pp. 116-119)

In the testimony of Boehme and Wymer, Aoki’s voice growing in the middle of “intertextual spaces of inter-faces” is drowned out by irreconcilable differences. The two competing visions are in opposition, and the opposing visions are too different to give

rise to new possibilities. Lydie Raschka (1999) spent a year assisting new Montessori teachers in public schools. Her findings echo those of Boehme and Wymer:

I find that the teachers struggling in situations like this are worried about the same things. “My room doesn’t look very Montessori,” they warn ... Some of these teachers, after their first year of intern visits, never get back to Montessori ideas at all. They seem confused about the ideal presented in training versus the reality of what they are experiencing. They become disillusioned.... The teachers survive any way they can, using a mishmash of ideas, whatever works. (p. 21)

Judith Wylie (1998) explores the landscape of public Montessori schools in a study of assessment practices in Montessori schools. After interviewing principals and teachers in private and public Montessori schools, she conducted a domain analysis and follow-up interviews. Wylie finds that her public school teacher participants perceive in their colleagues a loss of faith in Montessori teaching practices:

All mentioned that some teachers in public Montessori programs do not believe in Montessori education and/or do not have faith in the child, and that these teachers are prone to teaching to a test as well as to “falling back on” [sic] traditional methods for instruction and for classroom management. (p. 124)

One of her public school participants “feels it necessary to use traditional-classroom techniques to manage her classroom,” while another feels “overwhelmed, floating and struggling” (p. 130).

Wylie (1998) believes that differences in the respective cultures of public and private education shape the lived realities of Montessori practice differently in public and private Montessori schools. Her public school participants are strongly influenced by the goals and objectives for public education “developed within the political arena through negotiation and compromise by legislators, advisors and lobbyists” (p. 177). Because these goals and objectives have the force of law, they overshadow the Montessori philosophy in the minds of Wylie’s public school participants. “The paradigm is that of

‘social efficiency,’ derived from industry, with students as products: goals, objectives and testing as quality control; teachers as assembly-line workers and administrators as management” (p. 179).

Wylie (1998) contrasts the goals of public schools with the anthropological insights that shape Montessori’s educational philosophy:

In contrast, the goals and objectives of Montessori education have been built up through the discoveries of hands-on practitioners working from anthropological insights.... Montessori’s first concern was the quality of a child’s life; a child’s learning was more a by-product than a goal. Human nature and the pattern of its development are source and guide for education goals, objectives and methods. (pp. 179-180)

Additionally, for Montessori magnet schools, she identifies a third competing paradigm in the desegregation goals set by federal courts:

The goals of a magnet school are not developmental or even predominantly social-efficiency, but social meliorist.... The term, *public Montessori magnet* school actually denotes three competing paradigms of educational thought and practice.... Goals for a public Montessori magnet school may be said to exist in an unstable state of tension as the socio-political paradigms of the public magnet program chafe against the developmental paradigm of Montessori education. (p. 182)

In a study of leadership practices in public Montessori schools, Ginger McKenzie (1994), echoes the themes in Wylie’s study: “Keeping the creeping encroachment of traditionalism at bay becomes a difficult job. This encroachment is insidious and pervasive” (Otis, as cited in McKenzie, p. 58). Drawing upon her experiences in Montessori teacher preparation, Margaret Loeffler (1994) also identifies conflicting paradigms in Montessori public schools:

The focus upon curriculum and materials has made communication with public school personnel easier to achieve, since it is closer to the language of traditional education.... But the focus runs two risks: the risk of missing the uniqueness of Montessori’s approach to the elementary child ... and secondly, the risk of placing an enormous burden on teachers.... An even more serious concern ... is the move toward standardization under the

guise of quality control... Although much verbal agreement is given to the notion of individualization, if every child is expected to proceed through the same activities to achieve a level of competence, then the idea of individualization is not understood. (p. 19)

Birgitte Malm (2003), in a study that included Swedish public Montessori school teachers, finds that Montessori teachers experience a pull between educational philosophies when Montessori and traditional classes co-exist within the same school building. She researched the life stories of eight Montessori primary teachers, four of whom were in “regular” (public) schools. She asks, “Do Montessori teachers feel the need to succumb to strategies such as assimilation, ... isolation or defense?” (p. 2). Diaries kept by teachers, and interviews with them, provide evidence that Swedish Montessori teachers in public school settings are protective of the Montessori culture: “There is a tendency among some teachers to believe that there are ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ ways of doing things, in regard to the imperatives laid down in Montessori educational theory” (p. 14).

For Boehme and Wymer (2004), Loeffler (1994), Otis (as cited in McKenzie, 1994), Malm (2003), Raschka (1999), and Wylie (1998), the sliding landscape of public Montessori schools is an unstable and disorienting place. These researchers hear confusion, tension and a sense of loss in the voices of public school Montessorians navigating between and among state tests, externally mandated curriculum goals and objectives, and “the creeping encroachment of traditionalism” (Otis, as cited in McKenzie, 1994, p. 58). The teachers they interview and survey struggle to maintain a vision of education as a process that “brings the child to a window opening out onto the infinite and invites him or her to gaze on ever-expanding horizons” (Cavalletti, as cited in Boehme & Wymer, 2004, p. 109). Aoki (2005i) believes that life in the classroom is lived in the spaces between child, teacher and subject, and calls on educators “to *decenter* them

without erasing them” (p. 282). But for the Montessori public school teachers in these studies, their de-centered, in-between place obscures their vision of child as learner, leads to “a loss of imagination, integration and reflection” (Boehme & Wymer, 2004, p. 119), and creates a sense of struggling to survive, being misunderstood, “overwhelmed, floating and struggling” (Wylie, 1998, p. 130). The Montessori public school, rather than being a “place of difference, where something can happen and be created, where whatever is created comes through as a voice that grows in the middle” (Aoki, 2005i, p. 282) is characterized in these studies as a threatening and confusing landscape that silences and oppresses, drowning out Montessori teachers’ voices and obscuring their vision of the familiar landmarks of Montessori’s child-centered pedagogy.

Swimming Upstream in a Flood under a Dark Cloud

For another teacher, John Hutcheson (2005), a feeling of “swimming upstream” has characterized teaching Montessori in public schools for 25 years, but “recently it seemed as though someone had opened the floodgates” (p. 22). His school district decided to base employee salaries on test scores, ushering in an new era of “intrusive monitoring and heavy-handed district mandates” (p. 22):

Next came a deluge of curricular mandates and a chain of command that sent forth intrusive monitors to ensure top-down directives – especially those related to standardized testing.... To underscore the urgency of increasing standardized test scores, Benchmark practice tests were unleashed.... The Benchmarks generated 36 additional tests.... Everyone seemed to have an answer, an agenda or a buck to make. Teachers were besieged on all fronts. (p. 22)

Hutcheson left public Montessori schools in 2005 to teach in a private school.

Richard Courage (2005) interviewed teachers in a New York public Montessori school who express similar emotions: “Teachers ... resent curriculum and testing mandates that undercut their professional judgments about children’s individual needs

[and call] standardized testing ‘a dark cloud’ creating pressure to ‘force-feed facts instead of inspiring love of learning’” (p. B8).

Like Boehme and Wymer, Hutcheson feels too much tension in his position within the public schools to be able to listen for Aoki’s voice growing in the midst of contending paradigms. These teachers bear witness to a landscape in which competing curriculum centers lead to a loss of vision for Montessori teachers. Caught between the call to guide and demands that they control, they do not find “creative possibilities in moving between and among these competing discourses” (Aoki, 2005i, p. 281). In their experiences, there is no possibility of decentering curriculum centers. They feel themselves and their way-of-being-with children erased, washed out, flooded. They experience a sense of being drowned out as the floodgates open and “intrusive monitoring and heavy-handed district mandates” flood through the spaces between child, teacher and subject, leaving only the strident vocabularies and routines of accountability.

What possibilities are there for Montessori teachers in public schools to find a balance between guiding and controlling? What might allow them to listen for “fingertip whispers” and help them keep the space between teacher, child and subject open? Between competing horizons, seeking balance, at times feeling drowned out, washed out, and erased, what is needed to allow them to dwell in the tension between paradigms and still hearken to a generative “voice that grows in the middle?”

Between Science and Spirituality

Hutcheson (2005) was willing to go on “swimming upstream,” but gave up in the face of opened floodgates of “intrusive monitoring and heavy-handed district mandates.”

I sense a desolation in his account that resonates with the first lines in Rilke's poem,
 "Shut out from the Law of the Stars:"

Ah, not to be cut off,
 not through the slightest partition
 shut out from the law of the stars.
 The inner – what is it?
 if not intensified sky,
 hurled through with birds and deep
 with the winds of homecoming. (Rilke, 1934/1995, p. 191)

Rilke's poem evokes a sense of longing for unity between our intellect and the clarifying depths of our inner selves. It begins with a sad cry, almost a lament: "Ah, not to be cut off." I hear in these words a resonance with the despair voiced by Hutcheson, Boehme and Wymer, and the impassioned, "How? How?" of my teacher-friends. Rilke cries out against even "the slightest partition." Boehme and Wymer strain to hearken to Montessori's call to teachers to seek understanding of cosmic forces, "the law of the stars," that reveal themselves in children; but they feel a loss of focus, a dimming of vision. They yearn to attend to the inner, hidden treasures in the depths of children's souls, but feel pulled away by state mandates. They feel shut off from the spirituality of childhood by the imposing presence of scientific measurement in public schools.

State mandates that propel the standards movement forward arise from the traditions of behavioral science. Montessori has a very different orientation to science. She calls for scientific pedagogy, but the science she describes is not like that of the behavioral scientist who measures, monitors and manages. Although her education as a doctor and an anthropologist led her to an empirical orientation, her narratives of teacher as scientific observer evoke mindful observers rather than experimenting technicians: "The thing which we should cultivate in our teachers is more the *spirit* than the mechanical skill of the scientist; that is, the *direction* of the *preparation* should be toward

the spirit rather than toward the mechanism” (Montessori, 1912/1964, p. 9). She expresses her vision of scientific experimentation through poetic imagery:

Something living ... issued from my experiments as a spring of water gushes from a rock. In good faith, like the simple Aladdin, I thought that I held in my hand a lamp which at the most could lead me into a place hitherto unexplored, but what I discovered unexpectedly was the treasure hidden in the depths of a child’s soul. (Montessori, as cited in Kramer, 1976/1988, p. 305)

Montessori seeks a kind of scientific understanding that can reveal the cosmic meaning hidden in the secret, inner life of children. Her biographer, Rita Kramer (1976/1988), shows that her spiritual, poetic orientation to scientific inquiry grew from her life experiences. Kramer portrays Montessori as a woman whose way of thinking was shaped by competing intellectual and spiritual horizons. Her life unfolded during a time of political and social upheaval. Kramer tells us that Socialism, Romanticism, Empiricism and Catholicism were all formative influences.

Competing Horizons

In 1896, 26 years old, Montessori emerged from medical school an articulate and impassioned feminist, advocating for fair treatment of women and children. Her first job was at a psychiatric clinic treating mentally disabled children, who were housed with adults in barren, prison-like facilities. She came to believe that the source of their erratic behavior was the barrenness of their surroundings. By 1899 her articulate pleas for a richer environment for “idiot” children led to a new state school for them, which she was invited to direct. Two years later, her “idiot” children, now benefiting from an enriched environment, were succeeding on state tests at the level of normal school children.

The unexpected success of her patients on state tests led her to an interest in the pedagogical aspects of her work, and she returned to the University of Rome where she

read philosophy and psychology, and eventually accepted a position as a professor of anthropology and pedagogy. During these years, Kramer tells us Montessori immersed herself in the writings of Rousseau, Herbart, Wundt, Pereira, Pestalozzi, Froebel and Italian anthropologists. This immersion brought her to a belief that education is a process of self-discovery and that new methods of teaching can encourage social progress. The idea of shaping a new world through responsive education became a core belief:

Education is a natural process spontaneously carried out by the human individual.... Teachers can only help the great work that is being done, as servants help the master. Doing so, they will be witnesses to the unfolding of the human soul and to the rising of a New Man who will not be a victim of events, but will have the clarity of vision to direct and shape the future of human society. (Montessori, 1946/1963, p. 3)

Montessori was especially fascinated by the writings of two French doctors, Jean Itard and his student Edouard Seguin. Itard, a French physician, took on the education of a boy found living wild in the woods of Aveyron, unable to speak. In his efforts to help this boy learn to communicate, Itard created a progressive sequence of sensory exercises which were further developed by Seguin. Seguin, a mystical socialist, worked out a theory that developmental stages of childhood learning begin with physical explorations and move gradually toward more abstract intellectual understandings (Kramer, 1976/1988, p. 60). Montessori tells us she hand copied the writings of these two men, word by word:

I translated into Italian and copied out with my own hand, the writings of these men, from beginning to end, making for myself books as the old Benedictines used to do before the diffusion of printing. I chose to do this by hand, in order that I might have time to weigh the sense of each word, and to read, in truth, the *spirit* of the author. (Montessori, 1912/1964, p. 41)

Seguin's notion that sensorial explorations can lead to a healthy and spiritually redemptive unfolding of children's inborn gifts touched Montessori deeply:

We must know how to call to the *man*, which lies dormant within the soul of the child. I felt ... that my voice which called to them, *awakened* the children. I was guided in my work by the deep respect which I felt. Seguin, too, expressed himself in the same way on this subject. Reading his patient attempts, I understand clearly that the first didactic material used by him was *spiritual*. (Montessori, 1912/1964, p. 37)

Kramer portrays Montessori as a devout Catholic; there are many references in Montessori's writing to the intersection of her scientific training with her Catholic beliefs. She says, "Let us seek to implant in the soul the self-sacrificing spirit of the scientist with the reverent love of the disciple of Christ, and we shall have prepared the *spirit* of the teacher" (1912/1964, p. 13), and, "It has always been recognized that a teacher must be *calm*, ... but there is here a question of a deeper calm, ... a spiritual humility and intellectual purity necessary for understanding of a child" (1936/1992, p. 137).

Montessori stood in the midst of competing horizons. A deep admiration for socialist reformers, the medical training which led her to an empirical orientation, and her Catholic upbringing are interwoven in her writings. Drawing from multiple traditions that spoke to her, she came to an open region where childhood stood revealed to her as a place of generative possibilities, a place where social reform *and* spiritual growth *and* scientific exploration meet and create new possibilities for humankind. Her work sets ideas and assumptions about science and spirituality in motion. Categories are blurred, creating a "hybrid zone of indeterminacy in-between" (Stallybrass & White, as cited in Hall, 1997, p. 236). She calls teachers to dwell in an in-between place, to envision themselves as both scientists *and* spiritual beings attuned to children's unconscious urge to follow cosmic laws.

Intensified Sky, Hurlled Through With Birds and Deep

When Montessori teachers orient themselves by the words of Montessori, in what ways do they dwell in an in-between place in the midst of *both* spirituality *and* science, in a place like Rilke's "intensified sky/ hurlled through with birds and deep/ with the winds of homecoming" (Rilke, 1934/1995, p. 191)?

One Montessori teacher who is also a medical doctor, Silvana Montanaro (2003), tells of her attraction to the scientific aspects of Montessori's work:

What has fascinated me ... is the spectacular blending of scientific knowledge and practical solutions offered us by the genius of this first Italian woman doctor. This fascination continues to grow as the research in the different fields support more and more her vision. (p. 2)

Montanaro also expresses a sense of the spirituality of Montessori teaching experiences:

We, the Montessori teachers, walk this new path of education, which is at the same time the path of a spiritual journey.... In this path we can find the possibility of nurturing our spirituality, the most valuable of our human capacities. This path is a demanding one, but in Montessori's books we have many guidelines for becoming a Montessori teacher and a spiritual human being. (p. 3)

Another Montessori teacher, Mary Loew (2003) says the words and work of Maria Montessori strike, "deep in our mind/soul." She tells of the call of love that teachers feel with children: "People's souls soften and sweeten when one speaks of children" (p. 18), and she recalls words of Montessori (1949/1995) that draw out the meaning of the "/" in her evocation of mind/soul: "Love ... is one aspect of a very complex universal force, which ... keeps the stars in their courses, causes the conjunction of atoms to form new substances, holds things down on the earth's surface" (p. 293). In Loew's exploration of the power of Montessori's words, she is struck deep in her mind/soul, but love of children creates a generative space that re-connects that which has been separated by the "/".

Ancient meanings of the root of the word science reveal a disjunction between mind and spirit in scientific thinking that is echoed in Loew's evocation of mind/soul. The word science derives from the Indo-European root *skei* (*American Heritage Dictionary*, 2000), meaning to split. Later, in its Latin root, *scientia*, science comes to mean knowledge, but the older origins of the word suggest that it is a knowledge that comes from the mind's ability to discern separation between one thing and another, to make distinctions, to split. Scientific knowledge, in its root sense, hearkens to cognition that makes distinctions arising from within the mind of the perceiver. In our scientific discerning, there is something of a split of ourselves both from the world, and from the spirituality within. As we make distinctions and create categories of being, do we experience ourselves as mind split from soul?

The word spirituality, on the other hand, arises from a root that evokes not a split, but a unifying flow. Its origin is the Latin word *spiritus*, meaning breath (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 2003), the flow of air in and out of our bodies, a flow that brings life. Our understanding of spirituality resonates with that taken-for-granted activity of our being, our breath. It flows through the invisible life-giving matter that surrounds us, fills our lungs, touches our cheeks in a breeze and ripples the surface of water. It connects us to a unity beyond that which we perceive in the splitting of cognition into mind/soul. Abram (1996) speaks of a quality of flow that exists in the unified awareness of indigenous, non-scientific peoples:

The ineffability of the air seems akin to the ineffability of awareness itself, and we should not be surprised that many indigenous peoples construe awareness, or "mind," not as a power that resides inside their heads, but rather as a quality that they themselves *are inside of*. (p. 227)

For Loew, as for Montanaro, Montessori's words evoke a sense of coming home to connectedness, a flow across the “/” separating mind/soul, a place of movement where our “souls soften and sweeten.” When we are struck deeply in our mind/soul we return to a knowing before our minds split the world. The “/” in mind/soul becomes a place of flow, where the teacher's soul is struck deeply and softens and sweetens.

Aoki (2005g), too, explores the significance of the punctuation mark, “/”:

A space textually accented with a mark: /, a graphically tectonic space, ... a space that may allow generative possibilities.... a site wherein the interplay is the creative production of newness, where newness can come into being. It is an inspirited site of being and becoming. (p. 420)

What Montessori asks of her teacher-scientists is a kind of passionate, unified awareness that dwells with both spirituality and science:

We give the name scientist to the type of man who has felt experiment to be a means guiding him to search out the deep truth of life, to lift a veil from its fascinating secrets, and who, in this pursuit, has felt arising within him a love for the mysteries of nature, so passionate as to annihilate the thought of himself. (Montessori, 1912/1964, p. 8)

What is it like for Montessori teachers in public schools when they seek, from their heads, their souls, and the sweetness of their hearts, to discern the hidden mysteries of their students' awareness? What meaning do they find within the “/”, a space that invites *both* “the possibility of nurturing our spirituality,” *and* “scientific knowledge and practical solutions?” How do they experience lines of flight in the spaces in-between spirituality and science?

Dwelling on the Boundaries of Between

There is tension, sometimes destructive, sometimes generative, in dwelling in a place between the accepted paradigm of scientific, teacher-controlled learning and a more nurturing and creative way-of-being-with students. Educators from many places share a

sense that the work of schools is made stressful and difficult when routines and vocabularies of science dominate. Mary Rivkin, speaking from a world of science teaching, says that “A potent source of alienation for all of us is the industrial metaphor that currently controls children’s education, with its training and testing” (1991a, p. 172). James Bradbeer, in Australia, finds that the drive in schools to rank and measure leads to a “neglected focus on freedom, happiness, reality, and becoming” (Bradbeer, 1998, p. 122). Canadian Deborah Britzman wishes that “education could ... attempt ‘an open world,’ ... without its criteria of standardization, prediction, norms, and deviancies” (Britzman, 1998, p. 98). Another Canadian, Peggy Howard, asks, “What value is evaluation in measuring what it can not?” (2002, p. 60). And from Wisconsin, Elizabeth Ellsworth poignantly reveals an extreme limitation of teaching-to-the-tests: “The bottom line for assessment purposes is for a student to get it ... even if she didn’t want to get it, didn’t enjoy getting it, or does not intend to use it” (Ellsworth, 1997, p. 46). The words of these writers echo themes heard in the words of Montessori public school teachers.

For Montessorians and other caring teachers, our in-between place – as ones-who-would mentor, give voice, empower, and listen in our teaching work within public schools dominated by the technical paradigm – can be disorienting, discouraging, disheartening. The felt need to be patient and attentive collides with a sense of urgency to prepare students for tests, for their future lives, or even simply for moving out into school hallways. Shortness of time, vastness of subject-matter content, requirements to coordinate with the schedules of others in the school, strain against a sense that students need time to be disorganized, explore tentatively, deepen understanding through wide-ranging investigations.

Aoki (2005h) notes that teachers tend to live in tension between planned and lived curriculum:

In curriculum-as-plan ... teachers are asked to be doers.... Teachers are “trained,” and in becoming trained, they become effective in trained ways of “doing.”... There is forgetfulness that what matters deeply in the situated world of the classroom is how the teachers’ “doings” flow from who they are, their beings. That is, there is forgetfulness that teaching is fundamentally a mode of being. (p. 160)

He contrasts curriculum-as-plan with curriculum-as-lived experience:

The situated world of curriculum-as-lived ... is a world of face-to-face living.... What shall I teach tomorrow? How shall I teach? These are the quotidian questions of a teacher who knows, from having experienced life with her pupils, that there are immediate concerns she must address to keep the class alive and moving. (pp. 160-161)

And he tells us, “Indwelling in the zone between curriculum-as-plan and curriculum-as-lived experience is not so much a matter of overcoming the tensionality but more a matter of dwelling aright within it” (p. 163).

As they struggle to “dwell aright,” to be fully awake to the paths they choose in their classrooms, what are the possibilities for Montessori public school teachers to look beyond the children’s experiences, into the power and meaning of their own inner pilgrimages? What is it like for them to seek ways to remember their “being” and the being of their students, in the face of constant calls to “do” – to cover content, organize the day, assess and record progress?

Between Horizons of Understanding

Leaving the safety of “doing” planned curriculum can be disorienting because turning to new ways of being-with students can also mean turning away from familiar, taken-for-granted understandings of teaching and learning. For many Montessori teachers, our first images of what it means to be in teaching and learning relationships

were formed in traditional classrooms in which doing-to students predominated over being-with them. Gadamer (1960/2003) explores ways that our taken-for-granted understandings are shaped by our histories and traditions:

We always find ourselves within a situation, ... a standpoint that limits the possibility of vision. Hence essential to the concept of situation is the concept of *horizon*. The horizon is the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point.... "To have a horizon" means not being limited to what is nearby but being able to see beyond it. (pp. 301-302)

Adults' horizons may be limited by the sense of self we developed in our own childhoods, but when we critically examine past experiences that shaped our understandings, we are reaching toward broadened horizons that allow us to see beyond a particular vantage point in order to gain new perspectives on who we are as human beings and as teachers living in classrooms in the world between curriculum-as-plan and curriculum-as-lived. Gadamer tells us we navigate toward new understandings by setting a course between our own fore-meanings, or biases, and the possible meanings in the words of others:

Openness always includes our situating the other meaning in relation to the whole of our own meaning or ourselves in relation to it. Now, the fact is that meaning represents a fluid multiplicity of possibilities, ... The important thing is to be aware of one's own bias, so that the text can present itself in all its otherness and thus asserts its own truth against its own fore-meanings. (Gadamer, 1960/2003, pp. 267-269)

Montessori teachers often express enduring faith in the insights they gain as they attend to Montessori's words as well as the traditions passed on from one generation of Montessorians to the next. Part of our preparation as Montessori teachers is creating a file of Montessori quotes that we find meaningful. Articles in Montessori journals are sprinkled with quotes from her books and with testimonies to the resonance teachers find

between her ideas and their lived experiences with children. Gadamer tells us tradition is reaffirmed and combined with new ideas when we lay claim to it as truth:

We are always situated within tradition.... Understanding in the human sciences shares one fundamental condition with the life of tradition: it lets itself be *addressed* by tradition. Is it not true of the objects that the human sciences investigate, just as for the contents of tradition, that what they are really about can be experienced only when one is *addressed* by them?
(Gadamer, 1960/2003, pp. 282-283)

He expresses here an interplay between tradition and lived experience and shows us that openness to the ideas of another always includes situating ourselves in new relations to how we understand our lives and our experiences. In acknowledging the knowledge we gain from another's words, we affirm our connection with the other, we embrace shared understandings and we cultivate our human responsiveness.

Gadamer also speaks of the alterity of text. He says a text has potential to be seen in many lights, and a close reading can bring us beyond our personal bias to the text's own essential truths. When we acknowledge the authority of another's words, we draw knowledge from these words:

The authority of persons is ultimately based not on the subjection and abdication of reason but on an act of acknowledgment and knowledge.... Authority has to do not with obedience but rather with knowledge.... Even the most genuine and pure tradition ... needs to be affirmed, embraced, cultivated. (Gadamer, 1960/2003, pp. 279-281)

When I first read Montessori's books as a young mother, her insights reshaped my understandings of what it means to be a parent and what it means to be a child. Over my years of being in teaching and parenting relationships with children, I situated the meaning of Montessori's words within the context of my own "fore-meanings," and I also situated the meaning of my experiences within the "fluid multiplicity of possibilities" represented by her words. Through the years Montessori's insights have

been re-presented to me within the context of my interactions with young people year after year, and I continue to develop an ever clearer and stronger sense of the genuineness of her authority. Yet the enduring message of Montessori is that teachers who seek to guide children well must be guided not by the words of others, but by sensitive attunement to the children themselves. Kramer recounts the words of Montessori at her last Montessori Congress in May, 1951:

After thanking her followers for the homage they had paid her ... she asked them to turn their attention from her to what she had been talking about. She was, she said, like a finger pointing to something beyond herself, and she asked them to look not at the outstretched finger but at what it was pointing to – “the child.” (1976/1988, p. 366)

I wonder what other Montessori teachers in public schools experience as they think about Montessori’s ideas? What diverts their attention from the vision of teaching and learning she offers, and what affirms her authority? What are the ways they attend to her words as though looking at the outstretched finger? And what are the lines of flight that show them ways to weave the threads of her vision into ever new ways of being-with children in the in-between world of public Montessori schools?

Shared Meanings and Boundaries of Difference

A boundary is not that at which something stops but, as the Greeks recognized, the boundary is that from which something *begins its essential unfolding*. (Heidegger, 1993a, p. 356)

Montessori teaching traditions arise from shared practices that shape the meanings of school experiences both for learners and for teacher-guides. The two public Montessori school teachers I spoke with in preliminary conversations identified several guideposts that tell them Montessori aspects of the middle school program are coming together in their classrooms. Students choosing work, concentrating during long blocks of uninterrupted time, learning through conversation, creating a sense of community, and

engaging with hands-on key activities were aspects of classroom life that make them feel they are creating a Montessori environment. In Montessori classrooms teachers measure the experience of learning by attending to children's joy and engagement with self-chosen work; they protect students' concentration; they prepare responsive learning environments; they encourage calm and a sense of orderly community life.

Shared traditions of teaching practices can provide Montessorians in public schools with common understandings of the meanings of teaching and learning. Within the unsettling context of public schools, such collective understandings might provide support and encouragement. But there is an additional dimension of shared Montessori practices that gives rise to a sense of group identity associated with a perception of difference. Cam Gordon (1995) articulates the sense that Montessorians are different in an article entitled, "Where's the Montessori?" He finds public Montessori middle schools provide "caring communities within which to learn and grow," (p. 21) but points out:

What distinguishes these ... "Montessori programs" is not obvious.... We find core curriculum – subjects and learning experiences which focus on academics. The bulk of each student's school day is spent on Math, Science, Social Studies and Language Arts.... We find specialists teaching in different subject areas. We see students moving from class to class.... Letter grades or other evaluative measures are administered.... Programs measure success by measuring student academic achievement. (p. 21)

Gordon acknowledges the power of pressures to conform in the face of society's expectations, but he urges Montessori teachers to return to the Montessori principle of "trusting children, relying on them to reveal their basic needs and setting up environments within which they have the freedom to act independently" (p. 22). Gordon draws from a vocabulary that marks the shared culture of Montessorians, as he calls for teachers to draw upon the situated, embodied experiences that mark Montessori teaching practices as distinct from other ways of teaching. He calls on teachers to dwell within the

boundaries of Montessori ideals and allow trust of children to guide them in their teaching and learning relationships.

Arjun Appadurai (1996) delves into the significance of boundaries drawn by shared cultural practices:

When we ... point to a practice, a distinction, a conception, an object, or an ideology as having a cultural dimension ... we stress the idea of situated difference, that is, difference in relation to something local, embodied, and significant.... Culture is ... regarded as a dimension of phenomena, a dimension that attends to situated and embodied difference. (pp. 12-13)

Montessorians share experiences of embodied and situated difference. They know the weight, the texture, the color and the size of pink towers, red rods, golden beads, moveable alphabets and a hundred other varieties of Montessori materials. They have straightened wooden boxes on shelves, and rolled cotton work rugs. Montessori herself frequently refers to the difference between her way of approaching children and the approach of other educational methods. She carefully constructed her teacher preparation programs to mark boundaries of differences. As Cossentino (2005) discovers in a study of Montessori teaching practices:

Montessori education ritualizes the boundary between insiders and outsiders.... Taking its basic form from the earliest courses offered by Montessori herself, the ritual of “taking training” is a seminal rite of passage symbolizing both transformation and preservation.... Completing the passage not only grants membership in the culture, it binds members to one another in the ritual responsibility of preserving the culture. (p. 236)

A recurring theme of Montessori’s stories is that something secret and sacred about childhood has been hidden from view by traditional parenting and teaching customs. Her stories paint images of hidden aspects of childhood that cannot be uncovered through ordinary observation. She says teachers must be transformed by a kind of spiritual attunement to children: “When she feels herself aflame with interest,

‘seeing’ the spiritual phenomena of the child, and experiences a serene joy and an insatiable eagerness in observing them, then she will know that she is ‘initiated’” (Montessori, 1916/2002, p. 110).

Peter Gebhardt-Steele (1997) echoes Montessori’s depiction of teacher as a different kind of observer as he contrasts Montessori teachers with “designers of school models ... oriented towards the goals ... more concerned with societal standards, future success, and cultural traditions than with the present developmental needs of the children” (p. 15). Michael Dorer (1993) repeats the theme of difference: “The Montessori school is different. It is unique. It should look and act distinctly different, one should be able to tell at a glance that this program is not like any other ... school” (p. 21).

What is the power and meaning of feeling different? Gephardt, Gordon and Dorer all articulate an attachment to difference. Reynolds (2003), on the other hand, honors the kind of disarray that arises in the midst of competing traditions and diverse perceptions of reality. “This multiplicity, this stammering does not settle in the comfortable IS of definitions. Movement can be unsettling, AND energizing” (p. 94). Reynolds celebrates movement between differences, where Gephardt, Gordon and Dorer find support in the boundaries created by difference. Does feeling different support Montessori teachers in Aoki’s (2005g) “creative production of newness” and Reynolds’ movement that is “unsettling AND energizing?” Or, does the drive to “maintain identity within and difference between groups” (Hall, 1997, pp. 2-3) close Montessorians off from the new, the unsettling, the energizing?

Montessori’s life work can be seen as a “struggle of meaning, breaking one set of associations and giving ... new inflection ... modified by the interaction and

interplay with another” (Hall, 1997, pp. 235-236). Her work grows from a generative place created by the tension of competing traditions. She sets ideas in motion. Beginning as a scientist, Montessori set out to gather evidence that would illuminate universal principles of development. What she found in her scientific observations arose from the scientific traditions she so fervently absorbed in her medical studies, yet her experiences with children reveal “a fluid multiplicity of possibilities” (Gadamer, 1960/2003, p. 268). She portrays children as evolving, and teachers as empowering children to explore their places in the world. She calls on teachers to be scientists, yet the pedagogy she describes is not oriented toward measuring and controlling. Her calls to teachers to interrupt commonsense notions of childhood and reverse power structures in classrooms connect her with teaching discourses associated with empowering, emancipating and liberating. And in the stories she gave teachers to share with children about the beginnings of the universe she weaves in spiritual beliefs. As Gadamer says of poetry (1960/2003), her work “dissolves customary words and modes of expression... into sheer material and life” (p. 470).

But, as Hall points out, sometimes when boundaries are breached and ideas are set in motion, there is a tendency to want to put things back into place, “to sweep it up, throw it out, restore the place to order” (1997, p. 236). I wonder what circumstances might make Montessori teachers in public schools feel an urge to put their ideas behind boundaries, in a protected place of predictability and order? And what of the more traditional educators they encounter in the hallways and meeting places of public schools? What circumstances might make them want to sweep up and throw out Montessori ideas?

Fences

Before I built a wall I'd ask to know
 What I was walling in or walling out, ...
 Something there is that doesn't love a wall,
 That wants it down! (Frost 1914/1991, p. 28)

Frost's New Englander questions the goodness of the fence he and his neighbor so carefully tend each spring. He wishes his neighbor, too, would question the goodness of fences. "He moves in darkness as it seems to me, ... He will not go behind his father's saying" (p. 28). Cossentino and Whitescarver (2005) contend that in the case of American Montessorians, a wall of differences has offered protective, sheltering boundaries. They suggest that the Montessori movement's stable place on the margins of the American educational scene is one reason it has remained distinctive. Echoing Appadurai's idea that situated difference is a protective aspect of culture, they characterize the rituals that govern classroom life, "the scripted lessons, the careful arrangement of objects on shelves, ceremonies like the Great Lessons" (p. 28) as "good fences." They believe that the dynamics of life on the margin have caused Montessorians to build walls that protect the cohesion of the community. Without these "fences," they suggest, Montessori might have gone the way of other educational innovations in America, too soon absorbed into the mainstream and forgotten.

Cossentino and Whitescarver (2005) find that in the case of Montessori in America, good fences have made very good neighbors: "Left largely alone to define and modify itself according to its own set of – sometimes contested – standards, American Montessorians have been able to manage a creative tension between transmutation and transplantation" (p. 28). They tell us that Nancy McCormick Rambusch, who founded the American Montessori Society in the 1960's, distinguishes between transmutation and

transplantation of Montessori theory and practice from Europe to America, reasoning that American practitioners should keep the essential elements of Montessori theory, yet interpret these elements to make them work within the context of American culture.

The American Montessori Society (AMS), although it was once closely affiliated with the organization founded by Montessori herself, the Association Montessori Internationale (AMI), is now a separate organization that considers itself less tied to tradition and more open to changes in practice. Cossentino (2005) finds that although there are degrees of adherence to Montessori traditions, and “legendary” disagreements between Montessorians affiliated with AMS and AMI about details of practice, Montessori teachers share similar views:

Debates among Montessorians focus on competing claims to legitimacy based on the “correctness” of practice. While squabbles over how best to prepare an environment, interact with children, or introduce a new piece of material abound, there remains remarkable agreement on the end to which these actions are directed. In other words, regardless of the perceived correctness of practice, Montessorians the world over share a common worldview. (pp. 215-216)

What are the ways a “creative tension between transmutation and transplantation” show themselves in Montessori public schools where teachers from the AMS and AMI usually work side-by-side? Transmutation and transplantation share the Latin preposition *trans*, which tells of movement beyond an original, across to a farther side. But where transplantation brings to mind digging up a plant or a culture, roots and all, and putting it in a new place, transmutation suggests conversion of the original into a fundamentally different thing. Alchemists say they ‘transmute’ a baser metal into gold or silver. Physicists transmute one element into something different by irradiation or

bombardment. Both transmutation and transplantation speak of change, as does the word Montessori uses so often, “transformation.”

What kinds of changes feel like transplantation, and which seem more like transmutation to Montessori public school teachers? What is it like for them to experience elemental changes, as though their ideas are undergoing conversion of one thing into another, like transmutation? And what is it like when they feel their ideals, ideas and visions can be simply dug up from the world of private schools and put into public schools, as in transplantation? Cossentino and Whitescarver (2005) speak of transmutation as a liberalizing process:

Transmuting Montessori ... meant liberalizing a set of ideas and practices that were, at least in their original form, quite radical. Here we use the term liberal not in opposition to conservatism, but in its classic sense: aiming to do the greatest good for the greatest number of people. (p. 28)

They associate transplantation with a commitment to protecting Montessori’s ideas from the threat of dilution and distortion, and find that vigilance of practice results as resistance to changing Montessori’s ideas continuously pulls against efforts to adapt the method to American educational traditions:

The tensions embodied in the historic rift between transplanters and transmuters ... are instructive, even hopeful.... Efforts to guard against the American penchant for tinkering with practice, we think, are well-founded. The Montessori method is, after all, a complex and highly coherent system – linking developmental theory, pedagogical action and moral worldview.... The ongoing tension between transplanters and transmuters has, perhaps unwittingly, produced a vigilance – in word as well as deed – that has allowed Montessori to evolve while maintaining its coherence. (Cossentino & Whitescarver, p. 28)

Montessorians in public schools live with vocabularies and routines born of breached boundaries. The “American penchant for tinkering with practice” knocks

repeatedly on the doors of public school Montessori classrooms, sometimes breaking down those doors. Dennis Shapiro (2005) tells us:

Montessori programs are rarely exempted from district-mandated test performance curriculum and strategies. With state-created standards always focusing on grade level expectations, Montessori classrooms focus on what third, fourth or fifth graders are tested on.... As Montessori teachers reach the limits of their conscience for compromising what they consider the best interests of their students, many become cynical or move on.... In at least two districts... union contracts required that less senior Montessori-trained educators be laid off and more senior teachers, with no Montessori experience, be placed in their classrooms. (p. 4)

Private Montessori schools in the U.S. may choose between transplanting ideas with their well-swaddled roots mainly intact, or gently transmuting ideas to adapt to American culture. But for Montessorians in public schools, efforts to transplant Montessori ideals seem to take on the character of transplantation's root word, *plantare*, which derives from an Indo-European root word *plat*, meaning to drive in with the sole of the foot (*Oxford English Dictionary Online*, 2003); transmutation may seem more like the elemental bombardment of physicists than the liberalizing of a set of practices.

Aoki (2005), Reynolds (2003), and Gadamer (1960/2003) portray in-between places as zones of possibility, places for evolutionary change, places of power, acknowledgement and knowledge. For Deleuze it is along lines of flight arising at borders between ideas that "things come to pass, becomings evolve, revolutions take shape" (Deleuze, as cited in Reynolds, 2003, p. 95). Appadurai (1996) and Hall (1997) tell us that boundaries of difference mark group identities and provide protection for the production and the exchange of meaning. Perhaps Montessori teachers in public schools, like Montessori herself, struggle with the meaning of their experiences, mix it up, and follow the child into wild new territories. Perhaps they find stability and support in the boundaries provided by shared meanings and a perception of difference. Or perhaps the

vigilance involved in trying to ward off being trodden under foot or bombarded conceals the revolutionary/evolutionary power of borders and masks the creative pull of competing horizons.

I have uncovered many layers of questions about what the experience of guiding and being guided by children in public Montessori schools might be like for teachers. As I enter into conversation with teachers in this study, I seek to uncover a deeper understanding of what it is that they experience as they live their teaching lives in the in-between zones of public Montessori schools. I want to find out what it is like for Montessori teachers in public schools to experience tensions that arise from competing discourses. Do they feel frustrated and torn, worn down by breached boundaries and a marginal place within the dominant paradigm, drowned out, bombarded, mutated? Are they driven to build good fences? Or, like Frost, do they question what they might be walling in or walling out if they build and rebuild walls?

In my search for understanding of the lived experience of public school Montessorians, I have explored texts that illuminate tensions in “zones of between” and what these tensions might mean to teachers (Aoki, 2005; Bradbeer, 1991; Britzman, 1998; Ellsworth, 1997; Howard, 2002; Reynolds, 2003; Rivkin, 1991; Shapiro, 2005; Stallybrass & White, as cited in Hall, 1997). I have voyaged through texts that speak to the challenges for both students and teachers in traditional student-teacher interactions (Doll, 2000; Freire, 1993; Kreisberg, 1992). I also have journeyed through narratives that tell of possibilities of generative and generous ways-of-being-in teaching and learning relationships (Jardine, 1998; Loew, 2003; Montanaro, 2003). My travels have led me to still other texts that touch upon what Montessorians might experience when they identify

themselves as part of a distinct and separate culture (Appadurai, 1996; Cossentino & Whitescarver, 2005; Dorer, 1993; Gebhardt-Steele, 1997; Gordon, 1995; Hall, 1997). Finally, my pilgrimage has brought me to first-hand accounts of life in Montessori public school classrooms (Boehme & Wymer, 2004; Hutchseson, 2005; Loeffler, 1994; Malm, 2003; McKenzie, 1994; Raschka, 1999; Wylie, 1998). These accounts speak to the tensions experienced in Montessori public school classrooms.

None of the narratives and studies I have found researches the lived experience of teachers whose day-to-day lives carry them into the midst of the tensions that arise when Montessori classrooms are placed within public schools. This phenomenological exploration lends a scholarly ear to the voices of Montessori public school teachers. I hope that by attending deeply to their voices, I will uncover pedagogically meaningful understandings of the challenges and opportunities they encounter in their teaching lives. I turn now to an exploration of the research methodology that orients my pilgrimage toward insight into the meaning Montessori teachers take from their experiences as they guide and are guided by children within public schools.

CHAPTER THREE: QUESTIONS OF MEANING

Living Questions

Be patient toward all that is unsolved in your heart and try to love the *questions themselves* like locked rooms and like books that are written in a very foreign tongue.... *Live* the questions now. (Rilke, 1934/2000, p. 35)

I am living questions: beautiful and difficult questions about a way-of-being I cherish. I want to understand what it means to be a Montessori teacher guiding and being guided by children in public schools. Life in a Montessori classroom is organically complex, crowded with multiple realities and the interplay of creative energies. Yet Montessorians within public schools are immersed in a culture that values streamlining, standardization and control. What aspects of being a Montessori teacher-guide survive and thrive in these settings? What are the ways in which this culture of standardization and control affects teachers' receptive awareness of students? What meaning do teachers take from their lived experiences in-between two very different pedagogical orientations?

These questions arise from my own experiences with young people in public Montessori schools, but my questions have grown beyond the boundaries of my personal experiences. In searching for understanding of the lived experiences of Montessori teachers in public schools, my inquiry leads me to broader questions as well. I want to know more about what it means to care for young people in teaching and learning relationships in both Montessori classes and in more traditional classes, and what it means to interact in caring, supportive ways with teachers who spend their lives attending to the unfolding lives of children.

My questions guide my choice of research methodology, as van Manen advises:

The questions themselves and the way one understands the questions are the important starting points, not the method as such.... There exists a

certain dialectic between question and method ... The method one chooses ought to maintain a certain harmony with the deep interest that makes one an educator. (2003, pp. 1-2)

The questions that call me to this research project are questions of meaning, questions about the inner workings of human souls as they reach out in caring ways to one another. Hermeneutic phenomenology is an interpretive methodology that resonates with my research interest. It is a research methodology that explores the stories and texts that bind together shared meanings of our lived experiences through reflective attention to the language we use, the questions we ask, the conversations we engage in, and the prejudices and traditions that shape our understandings.

Where experimental scientific methodology measures or counts aspects of observable reality, hermeneutic phenomenology interacts with narrative accounts of situated and embodied experiences. Both ways of gathering information, counting and accounting, arise from the Latin word *accompt*, meaning to put together (*American Heritage Dictionary*, 2000). Count has come to refer to computing or adding up – searching for understanding of a phenomenon through reckoning or enumerating. Account has diverged from the meaning of its sister word, count. It can still be used to refer to a reckoning or an enumeration, but it also has a narrative dimension. An account involves the telling of a story.

Like the words count and account, experimental sciences and human sciences such as phenomenology have common intellectual origins but convey very different meanings to researchers. Both are rational methodologies, based in a belief that we can make our experiences intelligible, and share our understandings with others in our world. Experimental scientists, on the one hand, meticulously gather countable and controllable bits of data, then reason toward generalizations that can be used in practical applications.

Hermeneutic phenomenologists, on the other hand, gather rich and nuanced accounts of human experience, seeking, as van Manen (2003) says, “precision and exactness by aiming for interpretive descriptions that exact fullness and completeness of detail, and that explore to a degree of perfection the fundamental nature of the notion being addressed” (p. 17).

Because the lived experiences of teachers lend themselves more readily to the telling of stories than to enumeration, I turn to hermeneutic phenomenology to guide me toward a deeper understanding of the meaning of these experiences. In this chapter, I recount my understandings of the interpretive methodology I have chosen to guide my search for answers to questions about what it means to be a Montessori teacher in public schools.

Six Pathways

Phenomenological exploration and scientific investigation both begin with questioning. But where scientific investigation moves immediately from identifying a single focused question to designing a procedure for controlled tests of hypotheses, phenomenological exploration steps purposefully away from pre-determined process and journeys into multiple layers of questioning. Van Manen (2003) says that phenomenology “tries to ward off any tendency toward constructing a predetermined set of fixed procedures, techniques and concepts that would rule-govern the research project” (p. 29). The phenomenologist enters consciously and reflectively into what Heidegger (1950/2002) calls “woodpaths” into the forest of lived experience. These woodpaths are not marked out with the kinds of technical, procedural guideposts scientists follow. They

are textual pathways that meander in search of “clearings” where the essential nature of lived experience might be interpretively revealed.

Woodpaths in a Pilgrim Forest

“Wood” is an old name for forest. In the wood there are paths, mostly overgrown, that come to an abrupt stop where the wood is untrodden. They are called *Holzwege* [woodpaths]. Each goes its separate way, though within the same forest. (Heidegger, 1950/2003, p. vii)

In phenomenological research, I step off the well-trodden pathway marked by my taken-for-granted ways of understanding, and enter unmarked woodpaths that lead deep into the pilgrim forest. On clearly marked pathways I tend to travel with only partial awareness of the forest world. Bark of trees, a mosaic of fallen leaves, glimpses of flowering dogwoods deep in the tangled green, brush lightly against the thoughts that occupy my mind. In order to move outside the bounds of my own thoughts into a more receptive awareness of the forest, I step off well-trodden pathways onto a side path, one that is not clearly marked. I allow myself to wander, even into wild places with no paths, where brambles and low hanging branches block my way. Casey (1993) explores the effect of moving away from accustomed landscapes into wilderness areas:

Earth and sky seem to step forward of their own accord. They begin to set the terms.... Earth reveals itself as an abiding yet ever-proliferating ground with a densely textured surface, sky shows itself to be a constantly changing yet inherently orderly atmosphere, ... and an arc encloses ground and things from the beyond of the sky. (p. 207)

In phenomenological research, I purposefully leave behind my accustomed ways of thinking, because stepping off the pathway of taken-for-granted understandings and abstract thinking stops my self-absorption and opens new possibilities of awareness. I begin to perceive the world in new ways, on new terms. I stop thinking about research in terms of techniques and procedures. This is what it means to choose a research

methodology that pushes away from a “predetermined set of fixed procedures, techniques and concepts that would rule-govern the research project” (van Manen, 2003, p. 29). Lost in an unfamiliar forest, I must step outside my familiar ways of thinking as I seek orientation. Orderly connections to day-to-day experiences slip away, and I cast about for new ways of understanding where I am. This is hermeneutic consciousness as Gadamer (1960/2003) describes it:

Hermeneutic consciousness is aware that its bond to this subject matter does not consist in some self-evident, unquestioned unanimity, as is the case with the unbroken stream of tradition. Hermeneutic work is based on a polarity of familiarity and strangeness. (p. 295)

I attend with opened awareness to the familiar world made strange, and seek orientation through both direct and interpretive experiences. In the forest, I become aware of the direction and texture of shadows, the movement of the sun. I listen to leaves moving and branches creaking. I see traces of others who have moved here before me. I feel the dignity and strength of the trees. The wind touches my core. In phenomenological research, I hear new meanings in familiar words as I attend to resonances and dissonances that often go unnoticed. I become aware of historical roots of ideas carried within descriptions of classroom life and in the word used to express these ideas.

Traveling through unfamiliar terrain I meander, but not aimlessly. I am aware of more than the details of the nearby forest. I peer deep into my surroundings, seeking to gain an understanding of where I stand within the forest as a whole. I try to grasp where my taken-for-granted pathway of scientific and analytic reasoning lies in relation to my hermeneutic journey. I move from familiar to strange and back to familiar in search of clear new perceptions. Berman (1998) reflects on the provocative power of this kind of meandering:

The unanticipated turns of the unfamiliar road ... provide newness, inviting reflective thought and action. Meandering makes the familiar strange and the strange familiar. It allows me to see the old in new ways.... Meandering invites the mind to twist and to turn as it deals with the intersection of thoughts from varieties of schools of study, as the mind fixes on ideas that create yearning for new personal directions, or as new ideas call forth a re-look at ways of being. (pp. 171-173)

As I move off of the clearly marked pathways of abstract scientific and technical thinking, I continue to hold a map of those pathways in my mind, but other ways of perceiving, perhaps more poetic or metaphorical, open up new possibilities of awareness.

As Heidegger (1993e) explores the etymology of the German word for forest clearings, he illuminates movement toward a more poetic opening of awareness:

The forest clearing [*Lichtung*] is experienced in contrast to dense forest.... *Lichtung* goes back to the verb *lichten* ... to make it light, free and open.... Light can stream into the clearing, into its openness.... The clearing is the open region.... The clearing sets us the task of learning from it while questioning it, that is, of letting it say something to us. (p. 442)

The image of a clearing in a forest suggests a sun-washed interruption of day-to-day reality as we come around a bend and suddenly perceive our life experiences in fresh new ways. Something shifts in our minds as they meander and question, and a clearing opens in our way of understanding. We see blades of grass reaching energetically into space, soft lichen nestled into crusty rocks, light streaming through air. Knots in our thinking loosen, the crush of daily living eases and we shift from focusing on the details of the path behind and ahead to an intense awareness of the open space we have entered.

The work of phenomenological research is to find clearings in the forest of day-to-day living where our experiences can be seen directly, without the shadows cast by taken-for-granted assumptions that often color our perceptions. Lived experience, our direct experience, is often covered over by abstract thinking. The Latin roots of the word abstract, *ad* meaning off, and *tractus* meaning draw (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 2003),

suggest a movement of our thoughts away from direct experience. As Abram (1996) says, we often fail to notice our moment-to-moment experiences:

The life-world is the world that we count on without necessarily paying it much attention, the world of the clouds overhead and the ground underfoot, ... the common field of our lives and the other lives with which ours are entwined. (pp. 40-41)

Phenomenological research is a search for the essence of the “common field of our lives and other lives with which ours are entwined,” as it is revealed by descriptions of experiences. Phenomenology seeks to uncover essential meanings by exploring and questioning the qualities of impressions we take from experience, rather than through analyzing, classifying and quantifying those experiences. When we enter a clearing created by phenomenological description, we attend in fresh ways to meanings inherent in our day-to-day life world. The description carries us from “what is familiar in an everyday way to what lies hidden in that familiarity as its meaning and ground” (Burch, 1990, p. 160).

Our lived experiences are our direct experiences, but the way we understand experience is always historically situated and perceived from within our particular historical situation. As Margolis (1989) says, “Self and ... world are never more than historicized referents ... that cannot but be symbiotically linked” (p. 83). Gadamer (1960/2003) shows that history is always at work when we try to understand something, whether we are aware of it or not:

History ... prevails even where faith in method leads one to deny one's own historicity.... Historically effected consciousness ... is an element in the act of understanding itself and ... is already effectual in *finding the right questions to ask*.... To acquire an awareness of a situation is, however, always a task of peculiar difficulty. The very idea of a situation means that we are not standing outside it and hence are unable to have any objective knowledge of it. We always find ourselves within a situation,

and throwing light on it is a task that is never entirely finished.... *To be historically means that knowledge of oneself can never be complete.* (p. 301)

Beginning with what we already understand from within our particular history and situation, phenomenology searches for meaning that goes beyond our situated, historically effected understandings. There is an inherent tension between our self-conscious awareness and our taken for granted, abstract understandings of everyday life, and it is in this tension that phenomenology searches for clearings. We search through “what unfolds and endures from life” (Burch, 1990, p. 130) to find the essence of experience:

Unlike something which one presumes to know but which is unattested by one’s own experience, ... what is experienced is always what one has experienced oneself, ... its discovered yield, its lasting residue.... Something becomes an “experience” not only insofar as it is experienced, but insofar as its being experienced makes a special impression that gives it lasting importance. (Gadamer, 1960/2003, p. 61)

Lived experience is inherently the experience of meanings, and those meanings lie both in our pre-reflective, taken-for-granted perceptions of our life world, and in what we make of what we live through. The details of our remembered experiences color our perceptions not only of what we are experiencing now, but also of where we stand in the world and what we see ahead. Phenomenology attends to both the pre-reflective taken-for-granted aspects of lived experiences and the remembered residue of lived experience that colors our sense of who we are.

Van Manen (2003) describes six interwoven pathways hermeneutic phenomenological research follows in the search for forest clearings:

- (1) turning to a phenomenon which seriously interests us and commits us to the world;
- (2) investigating experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualize it;

- (3) reflecting on the essential themes which characterize the phenomenon;
- (4) describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting;
- (5) maintaining a strong and oriented pedagogical relation to the phenomenon;
- (6) balancing the research context by considering parts and whole. (pp. 30-31)

Following these pathways as I research the meaning of being a public school Montessori teacher means I first journey back through memories of my own lived experience. I turn inward, questioning my teaching experiences reflectively while I orient myself to the phenomenon; and I gaze outward, questioning my preconceptions of the meanings of teaching and learning. Next, I wander on textual pathways that lead me away from my preconceptions and toward awakened understandings of the lived experience of other Montessori public school teachers. Prepared by these beginning journeys, I set out on a pilgrimage, across the boundaries of my existential isolation into the horizons of other teachers. I travel into conversational spaces with them, listening deeply for particulars of their situated, embodied lived experiences. I search for open spaces where these lived experience can be seen with fresh eyes as I engage reflectively and interpretively with themes revealed in their descriptive accounts of their experiences. I write and rewrite until I find words that convey and enlarge my perceptions of the essential themes that characterize the meanings of these experiences. I seek to find and maintain a strong and oriented pedagogical relation to the phenomenon of guiding and being guided by students in Montessori public schools as I think about what the experiences of these teachers mean. The sixth pathway, balancing the research context by considering parts and wholes, weaves through the entire research process, binding it together into a unity that transcends the parts.

Turning to a Phenomenon Which Commits Us to the World

Van Manen's (2003) first pathway leads inward. The phenomenologist who journeys in search of clearings begins by engaging with familiar vocabularies and routine activities in ways that move beyond self-evident and taken-for-granted understandings suggested by their familiarity. In Chapter One I tell the story of my remembered experiences as a Montessori public school teacher and administrator, and question my own preconceptions about the meanings of teaching and learning. The purpose of beginning the research project by exploring my own orientation to the phenomenon is to make my understandings explicit, so that I can then travel outside the boundaries of my own preconceptions and arrive at fresh views of the phenomenon. Gadamer (1960/2003) tells us that hermeneutic phenomenology requires the researcher to delve into habitual and unexamined ways of thinking, not just at the beginning of a research project, but throughout it:

All correct interpretation must be on guard against ... limitations imposed by imperceptible habits of thought.... It is necessary to keep one's gaze fixed on the thing throughout all the constant distractions that originate in the interpreter himself.... A person who is trying to understand is exposed to distraction from fore-meanings.... Thus it is quite right for the interpreter ... to examine the legitimacy – i.e., the origin and validity – of the fore-meanings dwelling within him. (pp. 266-267)

Questioning my taken-for-granted understandings about teaching and learning allows me to begin to see what might be hidden behind them. Turning inward to gaze at my fore-meanings leads me off the well-trodden pathway of my taken-for-granted understandings and onto shadowy woodpaths that lead away from my preconceptions. On these woodpaths I search for clearings that might open and broaden my thinking and questioning.

In turning to the phenomenon of guiding and being guided by children in public Montessori schools I use the metaphor of pilgrimage. Using this metaphor to enter and explore my orientation to the phenomenon draws me away from “imperceptible habits of thought.” Through a more poetic exploration than I might find using everyday language, I move out from my fore-meanings. As Heidegger (1971) says, poetic speech can call us to leave behind our accustomed ways of thinking and bring us to heightened awareness:

Poetry proper is never merely a higher mode (*melos*) of everyday language. It is rather the reverse: everyday language is a forgotten and therefore used-up poem, from which there hardly resounds a call any longer. (p. 208)

By using metaphor, I set out to open my thoughts to new ideas and different ways of thinking about teaching and learning. Van Manen (2003) tells us the use of metaphor nudges phenomenological researchers to let go of “the relative, historical, constructed, and social character of all truth” (p. 49). Phenomenology seeks images that allow nuanced naming of experiences, using metaphors in particular because they draw us “toward the original regions where language speaks through silence” (p. 49):

By the bold and running use of metaphor, the poet will amplify and give us not the thing itself, but the reverberation and reflection which, taken into his mind, the thing has made; close enough to the original to illustrate it, remote enough to heighten, enlarge, and make splendid. (Woolf, as cited in van Manen, 2003, p. 49)

The metaphor of pilgrimage opens avenues of reflective questioning and draws me across the boundaries of my own perceptions toward the horizons of others. In attending to the experience of pilgrimage, I begin a movement away from the existential isolation of my own consciousness. I set out to find paths that wind far away from my familiar ways of thinking. I set out to lose myself for a time by stepping off the map formed by my silent preconceptions.

Investigating Experience As We Live It

On van Manen's (2003) second phenomenological pathway the researcher steps purposefully outward, off the well-trodden inner pathways marked out by everyday conceptual maps. In Chapter Two, I engage with texts that move my thinking away from the easy flow of images and ideas that characterize my day-to-day vocabularies. I step off my conceptual map. I lose myself in texts that shift my thinking about the meanings of teaching and learning in Montessori public schools. In getting lost, I discover new perspectives and make startling connections I might otherwise miss. I listen for echoes of Aoki's (2005g) haunting evocation of generative spaces and fingertip whisperings in my remembered experiences. I see lines of flight in my teacher friends' caring interactions with children, as Loew (2003) opens her heart to reveal the sweetness at the depth of her mind/soul. I struggle with Hutcheson (2005), as he swims upstream against the tide of testing unleashed when someone opened floodgates. With Rilke (1934/1995), I lament being shut out from the inner, intensified sky, "hurled through with birds and deep/ with the winds of homecoming." New images arise, images not named on my original conceptual map of educational meanings. My understanding of where I stand in the world of ideas falls away, and as I move away from the taken-for-granted I lose sight of familiar landmarks that provide a comfortable sense of orientation.

With the sensation of being lost and the movement away from familiar landmarks comes a realization that my sense of direction has failed. Direction is a word that comes from the Latin words *di*, meaning apart or asunder, and *regere*, meaning to put or keep straight (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 2003). When we follow directions we are seeking to go from a sense of being apart or asunder to a place where we can put or keep ourselves

straight. When my sense of direction fails and I get lost, I experience being asunder from familiar ideas and images. In choosing phenomenology as my research methodology, I choose to step off the conceptual map where I am accustomed to putting and keeping ideas straight. I move away from the orderly realm of unquestioned experiences I know how to put or keep straight, out into an unfamiliar and sometimes overwhelming place that is apart and asunder. I follow textual pathways that lead me away from my internal sense of direction. I move onto meandering pathways that shift my thinking from part to whole and back again as I search for clearings that reveal unseen or hard to see aspects of the experience of guiding and being guided by young people in public schools.

There are many kinds of textual paths that can lead to clearings: anecdotes, passages from literary text, biographies, poetry, interpretive attention to the vocabularies people use as they speak about a phenomenon, etymological explorations, and philosophical texts are all possibilities. Phenomenology and hermeneutic interpretation do not provide directions in the form of procedures and techniques, but they do offer guidance for traversing textual pathways. This is a research methodology that resonates with the Latin roots of the word research. Research derives from the Latin prefix *re*, which has the general sense of back or again, and the French word *chercher*, to seek, which came from the Latin word *circare* to go round, or circle (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 2003). Phenomenological understanding arises as we seek out shifts in perspectives by circling away from, around, then back to the texts that orient us to our experiences, bringing back new awareness with each re-turn.

Gadamer (1960/2003) describes this research process, the hermeneutic circle:

Understanding is always a movement in this kind of circle . . . constantly expanding, since the concept of the whole is relative, and being integrated

in ever larger contexts always affects the understanding of the individual part. (p. 190)

He finds that the work of hermeneutics must always move on a circular path between the whole seen in terms of its parts and the part seen in terms of the whole:

The anticipation of meaning in which the whole is envisaged becomes actual understanding when the parts that are determined by the whole themselves also determine this whole.... Thus the movement of understanding is constantly from the whole to the part and back to the whole. (p. 291)

Searching for understanding of the experience of being a Montessori public school teacher as teachers live it rather than as I might conceptualize it abstractly, I wander through remembered personal anecdotes and stories of classroom life written by other teachers. I search through poetry, biographies, and philosophical texts. I explore curriculum theory. These texts take me from a close-up view of being a Montessori public school teacher to a broader vision of the world of education, repeatedly turning my thinking from part to whole, and back again. I journey through texts that provide a view of the context within which Montessori lived and worked, and I reflect on her writings to gain a closer view of her words. I think about what she means when she speaks of the spirit of scientists, and I question the world of science and how science shapes and, at times, distorts our understandings of childhood.

Before I reflect on the meanings of what I read, I have an idea of what I believe the text might mean. As I read more, and interact interpretively with the texts, my thinking expands, and my expectations of possible meanings shift. Gadamer (1960/2003) says, this is the work of hermeneutics:

We must “construe” ... before we attempt to understand.... It is of course necessary for this expectation to be adjusted if the text calls for it. This means, then, that the expectation changes and that the text unifies its

meaning around another expectation.... Our task is to expand the unity of the understood meaning centrifugally. (p. 291)

As I travel deep into the thinking of other teachers, philosophers and curriculum theorists, my understandings open both inward and outward. I see more clearly into the day-to-day experience of teaching in public Montessori schools, and my horizons expand so that I begin to understand more about what it means to be in the world outside Montessori teaching, for any teacher who attends in caring ways to the experiences of children. Between these new interpretations of part and whole, I experience a resonance that tells me I am understanding something real and true not only for me, but also for others in different situations, outside the horizons of my own reality. I know that I am catching meaningful glimpses of the experiences of others as they live them: “The harmony of all the details with the whole is the criterion of correct understanding” (Gadamer, 1960/2003, p. 291).

Reflecting on Essential Themes

Van Manen’s (2003) third pathway leads the phenomenological researcher deep into the wild heart of the pilgrim forest. Having stepped away from preconceived ideas and familiar images, I turn to narrative accounts of experiences. I converse with other teachers who share the experience of teaching in public Montessori schools, I listen intensely to their accounts of what their teaching lives are like, and I try to grasp the essential meaning carried in their descriptions and stories. As van Manen (2003) suggests, reflecting on essential meaning arises from everyday experiences, yet involves a difficult journey beyond everyday understandings:

To see the meaning or essence of a phenomenon is something everyone does constantly in everyday life.... But what is much more difficult is to come to a reflective determination and explication ... of meaning.... The insight into the essence of a phenomenon involves a process of reflectively

appropriating, of clarifying, and of making explicit the structure of meaning of the lived experience. (p. 77)

I re-orient myself as I explore and name the essential themes that characterize the teachers' stories and descriptions. As I listen to the words of the teachers who converse with me, I listen for the essential meaning carried by their words. Heidegger (1953/1996) tells us that it is the texts we share with others that bring us to open regions where lived experiences can be seen with fresh perceptions:

Logos as speech really means ... to make manifest "what is being talked about" in speech.... *Logos* lets something be seen ... namely what is being talked about.... Speech "lets us see," from itself ... what is being talked about. (p. 28)

Heidegger (1971) counsels caution, though. Speech can also conceal experience, as it arises from limiting human situations and perspectives. In day-to-day conversation we may use language in a way that covers over or distorts the original power of an experience, causing it to lose its power and urgency: "Most often, and too often, we encounter what is spoken only as a residue of a speaking long past" (p. 194). He tells us that everyday language can conceal a truth that was once uncovered by language:

A phenomenon can be *buried over*. This means it was once discovered but then got covered up again. This covering up can be total, but more commonly what was once discovered may still be visible, though only as semblance. (Heidegger, 1953/1996, p. 32)

Because of the tendency of language to conceal, Heidegger (1993c) says phenomenologists must attend to hidden aspects of experiences by engaging with "the open region and its openness" (p. 125). Words can distort and fragment truth and may only approximate understanding of the experiences of others, because our perceptions are not always communicated unerringly through language. As we speak, we sometimes shy away from sensitive areas, or use language that softens our emotions because we do not

wish to offend. At times our words convey unconscious assumptions about what we are naming; at other times we incorrectly assume understandings in our listeners.

As I search for essential themes carried in Montessori public school teachers' descriptions of their teaching experiences, I try to uncover or make visible open regions, by questioning and reflecting on the language they use to tell their stories. My efforts resonate with Montessori's call to attend to the small, nearly imperceptible clues in the lives of children that can open up understanding of the complexities of life in our world: "We began with methods of education and culture for the child, and we end by acknowledging that he is our teacher . . . , one who can reveal to us, as no other, our own nature and its possibilities" (Montessori, as cited in Standing, 1957/1998, p. 77). Similarly, the themes that arise in the words and stories of the teachers in my study provide clues that lead to new understandings of the nature and possibilities of teaching and learning.

Van Manen (2003) tells us that the process of thematizing leads to hidden layers of meaning:

Meaning is multi-dimensional and multi-layered. . . . In order to come to grips with the structure of meaning of the text it is helpful to think of the phenomenon described in the text as approachable in terms of meaning units, structures of meaning, or themes. (p. 78)

Themes arise as I work to make sense of what I hear and to understand the pedagogic significance of the experience of being a public school Montessori teacher. As I search for themes, I begin a process of naming significant aspects of the teachers' stories. Questioning and reflecting on the themes that characterize the experiences of Montessori public school teachers brings me to a space where I can engage with the multi-dimensional and multi-layered meanings within their words, in order to reveal something

of hidden yet powerful aspects of the experience of being a Montessori public school teacher.

Heidegger (1993e) says the encounter, the speculative mirroring of one being in the words of another, opens the possibility of a shared region:

Wherever a present being encounters another present being or even only lingers near it – but also where ... one being mirrors itself in another speculatively – there openness already rules, the free region is in play. Only this openness grants to the movement of speculative thinking the passage through what it thinks. (p. 441)

I look for themes in my search for ‘free regions’ that might grant me passage beyond my own ways of thinking and into open-hearted understanding of the lived worlds of other teachers. Discovering phenomenological themes is not a mechanical process of counting words, or coding selected terms. It is a speculative pilgrimage through, beside and around the teachers’ descriptive accounts.

Naming of themes is both a discovery of meaning, and an invention of my own mind, arising from my personal, inner, questioning interaction with the text of others. As van Manen shows, thematic naming arises, not from within me, but from the language used by my fellow teachers:

While I have the experience of fixing something with a theme, I can only do so by opening myself to the fullness, the promise of the notion embedded in lived experience.... As I arrive at certain thematic insights it may seem that insight is a product of all of these: *invention* (my interpretive product), *discovery* (the interpretive product of my dialogue with the text of life), *disclosure of meaning* (the interpretive product “given” to me by the text of life itself). (2003, p. 88)

In the interaction between my own thoughts, the discoveries of meaning within the text of my fellow teachers, and the disclosure of meaning that arises from our shared experience of living, I come to an understanding that is greater than my own inner reflections alone could provide.

Gadamer (1960/2003) offers encouraging words that guide me as I move forward in my reflective journey toward shared understandings through language:

The way we experience one another, ... the way we experience the natural givenness of our existence and our world, constitute a truly hermeneutic universe, in which we are not imprisoned, as if behind insurmountable barriers, but to which we are opened. (p. xxiv)

Although I must always start with my own understandings, the value of this starting place is that it allows me to begin to question. Understanding can only begin with where we are now, and understanding someone else begins with a recognition of where their words come from and the questions behind them: “The joy of recognition is rather the joy of knowing *more* than is already familiar. In recognition what we know emerges, as if illuminated, from all the contingent and variable circumstances that condition it” (Gadamer, 1960/2003, p. 114).

As I begin my research, I set out on a journey of discovery, purposefully leaving the familiar behind. Then, coming unexpectedly into an open space in the midst of the texts of our conversations, I recognize what I once took to be familiar as something strange and new. Gadamer’s hermeneutic universe promises that it is possible to find open regions in our relationships with others as we recognize in their words the familiar made strange and the strange made familiar. As I connect meaningfully with the themes that characterize my conversants’ descriptive accounts of experience, recognition brings me into a clearing, a space where openness to the words of other teachers allows me to enter a deepened understanding of their experiences:

All that is asked is that we remain open to the meaning of the other person or text. But this openness always includes our situating the other meaning in relation to the whole of our own meaning or ourselves in relation to it. (Gadamer, 1960/2003, pp. 268-269)

My questions allow me to step off my everyday, self-absorbed path. Questioning brings me out of myself, and I embark on a sort of pilgrimage, following my questions. In opening myself to the reality of other persons, I set aside, for a time, my own understandings of experience and ask what the experience is like for others. As Gadamer (1960/2003) says, I try to suspend my own prejudices and face others with an open and receptive attitude that allows me to wonder what their lives might be like:

Understanding begins ... when something addresses us.... This requires ... the fundamental suspension of our own prejudices. But all suspension of judgments and hence, a fortiori, of prejudices, has the logical structure of a *question*. The essence of the *question* is to open up possibilities and keep them open.... Only by being given full play is it able to experience the other's claim to truth and make it possible for him to have full play himself. (p. 299)

Encountering another person, we share words. We converse. Something in the words of the other touches a chord that resonates with my own experience, and creates an awareness of connectedness and difference. I want to know more about their experiences.

As Gadamer says:

In order to be able to ask, one must want to know, and that means knowing that one does not know.... The path of all knowledge leads through the question. To ask a question means to bring into the open.... The sense of every question is realized in passing through this state of indeterminacy, in which it becomes an open question. (1960/2003, p. 363)

The questioning connectedness I experience as I attend openly to the words of others changes my perception of who we are in the world, both as individual beings and together. Levinas (1972/2006) tells of movement toward shared humanity that occurs in speaking and listening:

Social experience is fundamental movement ... toward the Other who is not only collaborator and neighbor, ... but interlocutor: the one to whom expression expresses, for whom celebration celebrates.... In other words, before it is a celebration of being, expression is a relation, with the one to whom I express the expression. (p. 30)

Gadamer provides guidance in how to set about expanding possibilities of shared meaning; he calls for a “fusion of horizons” with the words of others. When he speaks of horizons, he brings to our attention both the particularity and vastness of each person’s situated perceptions:

We always find ourselves within a situation.... Essential to the concept of situation is the concept of “*horizon*.” The horizon is the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point.... “To have a horizon” means not being limited to what is nearby but being able to see beyond it. (Gadamer, 1960/2003, pp. 301-302)

Understanding others requires us to be mindful of the horizon we bring to our questions. I bring many perspective to this study. As a mother of Montessori children, I listen to the words of other teachers with a mother’s heart. I remember my son’s inquisitive fascination with small creatures and growing plants. Images of my daughter’s enchanted absorption in the grammatical constructions of Shel Silverstein’s poetry flash through my mind. As a Montessori teacher who has spent most of my adult life in the company of children, I listen with a teacher’s heart. The teachers’ descriptions of classroom experiences resonate with the joy I feel when I see Mahmoud’s tense shoulders relax while I listen to his story about his mother’s gift of a new shirt, the triumph that leaps in my heart when Leah’s sweet smile shines forth because she understands multiplication in a new way, and the despair I feel when I see Dahlia’s worried face as she struggles to complete a practice test for the state exams. After eight years in administrative positions, their words strike chords of remembered frustration when I recall the blank looks of principals and central office staff as I struggle to find common language in order to converse with them about Montessori practices within public schools. Now I have chosen to return to the classroom, and I as I listen, their words resonate with my present sense of creative tension, my gratitude for the time I spend with children, and my own hopes that I

can achieve a balance between the demands of state standards and the unique needs of the children in my care.

With awareness of my own horizons, though, I set out to attend sensitively to the words of other teachers in order to move outside the particularity of my own situated horizons and into the horizons of others. This movement is greater than simply finding connections between my life experiences and the words I hear. My questions bring me into contact with the experiences of others in a movement that can only happen if I can step outside the bounds of my own being. My questions lead me out of my own bounded situation into the horizontal space of other teachers, as I look beyond my own situation and ask what teaching in public Montessori schools is like for them:

Transposing ourselves ... always involves rising to a higher universality that overcomes not only our own particularity but also that of the other.... To acquire a horizon means that one learns to look beyond what is close at hand.... A hermeneutical situation is determined by the prejudices that we bring with us. They constitute, then, the horizon of a particular present, for they represent that beyond which it is impossible to see. (Gadamer, 1960/2003, pp. 305-306)

For Gadamer (1960/2003) questioning what lies behind the words of others, as well as beyond our own preunderstandings, is the pathway that allows our interpretations to begin moving beyond the boundaries of our own situation:

A person who wants to understand must question what lies behind what is said.... If we go back *behind* what is said, then we inevitably ask questions *beyond* what is said. We understand the sense of the text only by acquiring the horizon of the question. (p. 370)

My questioning pilgrimage brings me onto pathways that intertwine with the questioning pathways of others. I move beyond the horizon of my own questions and into the meaning-making not only of the other teachers I converse with, but also philosophers, curriculum theorists and poets, whose words open pathways to broader horizons. I want

to understand what lies behind others' words, and my own questions change to include a wondering attentiveness to the questions behind my encounters with the lived experiences of others.

For Levinas (1972/2006), attending to Others means more than moving into Gadamer's "universality that overcomes ... particularity" (1960/2003, pp. 305-306). For Levinas, connecting with Others through language means entering open regions in which our understandings are challenged and changed:

The relation with Others challenges me, empties me of myself and keeps on emptying me by showing me ever new resources.... I find myself facing the Other.... Speaking is first and foremost this way of coming from behind one's appearance, behind one's form; an opening in the opening. (pp. 29-30)

Naming of themes is a way to get at the deep meaning of the experiences of others. It is a way to give temporary shape and form to what van Manen (2003) calls "an ineffable *essence*" (p. 88). Thematic naming can never wholly unlock the mysteries of experience, yet recognition of themes which carry significance and meaning to others can bring us to understandings that enrich our lives and call us to live responsibly toward others.

Levinas' words bring me back to Rilke's advice to the young poet:

Be patient toward all that is unsolved in your heart and try to love the *questions themselves* ... like locked rooms and like books that are written in a very foreign tongue.... *Live* the questions now. (Rilke, 1934/2000, p. 35)

Gadamer, like Rilke, counsels phenomenologists to live with questions hidden within the texts of others. As we come to understand how others name their experiences, we move beyond ourselves, beyond our own questioning and naming. We become open to the horizon of inquiry of others: "Working out the hermeneutical situation means acquiring the right horizon of inquiry for the question evoked by the encounter"

(Gadamer, 1960/2003, p. 302). Interpretive understanding arises when we are able to enter the horizontal space of the other and express the questions arising from the other's particular situation: "To acquire a horizon of interpretation requires a fusion of horizons.... The text is made to speak through interpretation" (Gadamer, 1960/2003, p. 397). When we achieve a fusion of horizons, we can transcend particularity and situatedness:

The miracle of understanding consists in the fact that no like-mindedness is necessary to recognize what is really significant and fundamentally meaningful.... We have the ability to open ourselves to the superior claim the text makes and to respond to what it has to tell us. (Gadamer, 1960/2003, p. 311)

Van Manen (2003, pp. 90-100) provides guidance for phenomenological researchers as they set out to identify themes in conversations. He tells us to begin by listening to each conversation as a whole, attending to the main significance of what is said in each conversation. As we listen, he tells us to stay alert for possibilities of error in our interpretation of significance, either because of our own fore-meanings, or because of misunderstanding the personal situations of others. Next, he says to search for phrases or stories that reveal something central about what is being described. Then, within and around these phrases and stories, he says we need to move from awareness of the whole to attention to the parts: looking closely at details, asking what is revealed in the particular words used, or perhaps in the way our conversational partner's voice sounds as she speaks. After attending to the whole of a single conversation and its many layers of details, he tells us to search for commonalities or ways of naming the experience that occur in more than one conversation, or repeatedly within the same conversation. At the same time, he suggests we attend to resonances between what we hear in our conversations, and things we have read or experienced ourselves.

As we try to make our reflective understandings explicit in naming of themes, van Manen (2003) suggests we enter a wide-ranging conversation about these themes, drawing not only upon the words of the conversants in our studies, but also listening for related meaning in the words of philosophers, poets, novelists, and others. This wide-ranging conversation brings us to the fourth pathway in the phenomenological journey. We begin a process of creating a space within and between the words of the teachers, the questioning behind their words, the thoughts and words of others found in related texts, and the “ineffable *essence*” carried in the words of our conversational partners.

Describing the Phenomenon

Van Manen’s fourth pathway is a journey into recognizing and writing about meaning:

Creating a phenomenological text is the object of the research process.... Writing and reading are the ways in which we sustain a conversational relation.... The phenomenological method consists of the ability, or rather the art of being sensitive – sensitive to the subtle undertones of language, to the way language speaks when it allows the things themselves to speak. (2003, p. 111)

On this fourth pathway, the self of the writer is partially erased. It is a journey into darkness in search of the elusive. In phenomenological writing and rewriting I seek entry into the experiential reality of others. I feel an urgent sense of responsibility to move beyond my own understandings in order to find ways to articulate the elusive essence of the meaning-making of others who share their stories with me. I leave the pathways of understandings that can be traveled lightly and easily in order to seek open spaces somewhere outside my own mind where I can access meanings held in the descriptions and stories of the teachers who converse with me.

These spaces, opened up by words of others, are always seen and experienced from within my own mind; I travel into the text of others, yet through these texts I re-enter my own texts. As van Manen (2002) describes this pathway: “Strangely, in the space of the text our experience ... seems to vacillate between transparency and impenetrability” (pp. 2-3). My self, the self of researcher-writer, although transformed, remains rooted in my own life experiences, my own culture and the understandings and questions that arise from my own meaning-making journey.

Yet phenomenological description is not successful unless it transcends my relationship to it and also speaks both to the experiences of those whose text I am interpreting and to the experiences of the reader:

When a text is successful, and when the reader is open to it, then the text may have an effect that is almost inexplicable. The words literally take the reader or listener into a wondrous landscape, evoking a feeling of disorientation, causing confusion that tends to accompany the experience of strangeness, of being struck with wonder. (van Manen, 2002, pp. 3-4)

Phenomenological description draws the reader into an open space where lived experiences are shared and re-visioned. The attentive wondering of the writer-researcher becomes the attentive wondering of the reader, drawing both into new understandings of the familiar world. Both writer and reader gaze with fresh eyes and new questions that transport them across the boundaries of existential isolation into awareness of the meaning-making selves of others.

The etymology of the word meaning expresses something of the back and forth journey through words on van Manen’s fourth pathway. Meaning derives from the Indo-European word *i-mene* which suggests expressing opinions by turns; from the Old Frisian word *minne* which conveys a sense of love, affection, or agreement, and Scandinavian forms of the word *meina*, *mena* and *mene*, all of which express the idea of intending,

signifying, and considering (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 2003). Meaning in phenomenological descriptive writing flows from expression of significance in texts, and successful phenomenological description touches a chord of agreement between researcher, the described lived experiences and readers. Van Manen (2002) says that in the space opened up by phenomenological descriptions meanings resonate and reverberate with reflective being:

As one writes it may happen that the space opened by the text becomes charged with a signification that is, in effect, more real than real.... It can be experienced by the writer or reader as real, as unreally real, as nearer than the nearness that things may have in ordinary reality.... The phenomenologist as writer ... starts from the midst of life, and yet is transported to that space where, as Robert Frost once said, writing is “like falling forward into the dark.” Here meanings resonate and reverberate with reflective being. (pp. 6-8)

As a researcher, phenomenology calls me to leave my self behind, enter the forest of lived experience in search of meaning-making others, and open myself in a caring way to the significance of their experiences. I then begin a journey that moves back and forth between my solitary self, the words and stories of my conversational partners, and a wide variety of written texts that might bring me to that space where “meanings resonate and reverberate with reflective being.”

Van Manen (2003) tells the phenomenological writer to listen not only to the words and stories in conversations and written texts, but also to silences. When we explore the taken-for-granted and unexpressed aspects of an experience, we can sometimes find a richness of meaning that would otherwise go unnoticed. Listening to silences can mean attending to hidden cultural assumptions or unspoken worldviews buried within descriptions of experiences. Listening for silences can also mean hearing quiet places in conversations and writing as generative pauses; meaning sometimes arises

from the space created by quiet listening, both in our spoken conversations and in the ways we write about our perceptions. Van Manen suggests that when we wait for our conversational partners to fill a silence rather than jumping in to fill the void, we allow possibilities for them to find new ways of expressing meaning. And in our writing, he says we might, at times, allow silences that invite readers to enter into conversation with the text and engage in their own meaning-making.

There are times, though, when listening to silence brings us to awareness of obstacles to phenomenological writing. Those are the times when we feel we understand something, but cannot find the words to express it well. When our own silence comes from a tacit understanding that we have trouble putting into words, van Manen (2003) offers ideas for moving beyond silence by broadening the conversation to invite in other voices:

The research-writing process requires of us that we sometimes “borrow” the words of another since this other person is able, or has been able, to describe an experience in a manner (with a directness, a sensitivity, or an authenticity) that is beyond our ability. (p. 113)

As I hear in our conversations what it is like for the teachers to try to hold a curriculum plan mandated by the state in mind and at the same time be responsive to the unique academic, emotional and social needs of a particular child, I turn to the thoughts of curriculum theorists like Aoki, van Manen, Huebner or Reynolds to help express the experience. Their words join the conversation and lend clarity to thoughts shared between the teachers and myself. Van Manen also suggests turning to the arts for help expressing our tacit understandings:

Something that appears ineffable within the context of one type of discourse may be expressible by means of another form of discourse....
The truth-experience made possible through the language of poetry, novels, painting, music, and cinematography may be reflected upon

phenomenologically, and thus imported into phenomenological writing. (2003, p. 114)

When the poet Rilke (1934/1995) writes about the inner self as “intensified sky,/hurled through with birds and deep/with the winds of homecoming” (p. 191), he evokes something I could not easily express. His image of clarifying depths within our inner selves resonates with a longing I hear in the voices of teachers as they speak of being overwhelmed by tension between state mandated learning outcomes and the Montessori ideal of following the child. Rilke’s images make possible an understanding of the teachers’ longing, in ways beyond my abilities as a writer.

Above all, van Manen encourages phenomenological writers to persevere in their efforts to find ways to express their understandings, even in the face of stubborn silences that obstruct our abilities to write:

The poet Rilke described how lived experience, memory, time, and reflection are all involved in the writing of a good poem.... Phenomenological writing also requires a high level of reflectivity, an attunement to lived experience, and a certain patience or time commitment. (2003, p. 114)

As we draw upon our memories, live with the texts of our conversations, write, rewrite and rewrite again, he suggests we may unexpectedly find ways to express those elusive understandings.

In the end, with all our efforts, a phenomenological inquiry cannot offer a complete interpretation, because that which is complete becomes rigid and impenetrable. Van Manen (2002) affirms the impermanence of insight, and calls on phenomenologists to maintain a willingness to step away from the inflexibility that might come from seeking a definitive description: “It behooves us to remain as attentive as possible to life as we live it and the infinite variety of possible human experiences and possible

explications of those experiences” (pp. 6-8). Phenomenological writing and rewriting requires conscious and continuous movement toward awareness of others; for this reason, van Manen tells us that phenomenological research should be grounded in the fifth pathway, caring attentiveness to the lived experiences of others.

A Strong and Oriented Pedagogical Relation

For van Manen, the power of hermeneutic phenomenology lies in its ability to strengthen the bonds between research and life. His fifth pathway is one of pedagogical caring and attentive action:

Every project of phenomenological inquiry is driven by a commitment of turning to an abiding concern ... Phenomenological research ... is always a project of someone: a real person, who, in the context of particular individual, social, and historical life circumstances, sets out to make sense of a certain aspect of human existence. (2003, p. 31)

He tells us, “Love is foundational for all knowing of human existence.... Especially where I meet the other person in his or her weakness, vulnerability or innocence, I experience the undeniable presence of loving responsibility” (van Manen, 2003, p. 6).

For teachers who inhabit in-between spaces like Montessori public schools, pedagogical attentiveness and loving response-ability can mark the way to open regions of understanding between teachers and students. In the classroom, Davidson’s head bent over his decimal equivalency work touches my heart. I know this is very frustrating work for him. He feels worried that there is something wrong with him, because he believes that other students in the class can do this work effortlessly, while he struggles with it. I note tension but I also see concentration, so, with great effort, I hold myself back from offering help. I attend to the movement of muscles in his face. What I see in his face makes me wait, and when he looks up from his work, I see a triumphant glow. For this moment, he feels on top of the world. I know that often, distracted by other children or by

my awareness of time rushing by, I have hurried him or offered help that only added to his self-conscious anxiety. But today I step back and allow time, and in that time he grows a little more independent and self-confident. Between the state's mandate that fifth grade students learn to recognize and name commonly used fractions in their equivalent decimal form and my pedagogical attentiveness, a generous and nurturing space opens that allows Davidson's confidence in his strengths and capabilities to grow. And as I see triumph glow in his eyes, I understand again, and in new ways, the value of sometimes holding back rather than jumping in to help.

Just as being attentive to the experiences and needs of students can provide orientation for teachers, pedagogical attentiveness can help phenomenological researchers be responsive to meanings embodied in particularities of their conversants' situations. Wondering attentiveness to particular experiences of other human beings can lead to a what van Manen (1986) calls "pedagogic thoughtfulness" (p. 12). An attentive stance leads to personal engagement with others. And because it can lead to a deep questioning of what is good for *this* person or *these* people, it also serves as a call to personal or political action in the world. "We want the result of our inquiry, through the responses that we make, to offer up a new way of seeing our practice, effecting an intellectual transformation" (Hultgren, 1994, p. 23).

Van Manen's pedagogically grounded phenomenology is a research methodology that reaches out from an isolated and bounded self as it responds to a call of love and loving response-ability. Heidegger's phenomenological description of boundaries brings forth an idea that where we meet the other in responsive interactions, an unfolding occurs: "A boundary is not that at which something stops but, as the Greeks recognized,

the boundary is that from which something *begins its essential unfolding*” (Heidegger, 1993a, p. 356). A boundary is a threshold that calls us to move outside ourselves into awareness of the realities of others, and also to move inside ourselves and attend to our own ways of understanding: “The threshold ... sustains the middle in which the two, the outside and inside, penetrate each other. The threshold bears the between. What goes out and goes in, in the between, is joined in the between’s dependability” (Heidegger, 1971, p. 204).

Phenomenology’s ultimate aim is “the fulfillment of our human nature: to become more fully who we are” (van Manen, 2003, p. 12). The call to care that arises from phenomenological research, like teacher-learner relationships, can connect our own humanity to that of others. For Levinas (1972/2006), when we face the Other our own Ego “is banished” and becomes “infinitely responsible in face of the Other” (p. 33). Berman (1994) draws upon Levinas as she explores meanings embedded in caring relationships: “When we enter the threshold of the other, or see the face of the other, we respond in an ethical manner” (p. 12):

Being called to care means ... entering into relationships with the other – sharing the joys, fears, and darkness of others. When I enter into the world of others, I meet the other in weakness of body but possibly strength of spirit, in fears but also in joy, in apprehension but also in faith.... My task is to see the other face to face and to permit myself to experience that face, occasionally allowing for ruptures in my thinking as the face of the other challenges me to responsiveness and responsibility. (p. 12)

My questioning begins with wondering what it means to care for young people in teaching and learning relationships. I am drawn to Montessori’s idea that “The child is both a hope and a promise for mankind. If we therefore mind this embryo as our most precious treasure, we will be working for the greatness of humanity” (Montessori,

1936/1992, p. 31). My questioning has grown to include wondering what it means to “work for the greatness of humanity,” not only by attending to children, but also by reaching out in caring ways to the teachers who lovingly attend to the unfolding lives of children. This research project is about listening to the meaning of the experiences of those who spend their lives guiding the hope and promise of humankind. In Noddings’ exploration of caring for ideas, I find a description of the kind of research I am undertaking. She explores the interaction of activity and receptivity in creating meaning:

I am alternately active (I’ll try this) and receptive (What is happening here?) The active phase depends upon my store of knowledge and is partly analytic, but the receptive phase provides that which will be acted upon. I must let things come in upon me.... I am watching, being guided, attentive. (Noddings, 1984/2003, p. 165)

As teacher, I present a lesson, then watch attentively to see my students’ responses.

In Montessori’s words, “Instead of giving out what she has in herself, the teacher must bring out the full possibilities of the children” (Montessori, 1916/2004, p. 30). I offer support and guidance, then attend carefully to the learner’s response. Similarly, as a phenomenological researcher, I ask questions, then I listen attentively to my conversants’ responses, trying to hear beyond my own prior meanings. This is the same kind of research Montessori (1936/1992) describes when she says:

When I am with children ... the greatest privilege that I have when I approach them is being able to forget that I even exist, for this has enabled me to see ... little things, simple but very precious truths. (p. 85)

In phenomenological research, I maintain awareness of what I bring to the conversation, but I make every effort to move beyond myself. I try to become present for the phenomenon in a way that is entirely receptive. In reaching out in caring ways to the world through attentive responsiveness, I am guided by the impressions that come in upon me, but the purpose of the research is to uncover the meaning of experience as it is

lived by my conversants. Noddings (1984/2003) tells us that as our attentiveness puts us into contact with the object of our caring responsiveness, we feel compelled to move toward understanding:

Manipulative or assimilative activity must cease in order that what-is-there may exercise its influence upon the situation. If we agree that an act of consciousness puts us into contact with the object, there is still the question: *How shall I act upon it?* (p. 165)

In the same way, in phenomenological research I set aside what I bring to the conversation “in order that what-is-there may exercise its influence.” And then the question arises, “*How shall I act upon it?*” Noddings’ caring teacher seeks involvement with the student, not just transmission of knowledge. Van Manen’s pedagogically grounded phenomenological researcher stays oriented to the question of how research can inform pedagogical relationships. Montessori’s teacher-scientist sets aside ego and even scientific identity in order to attend to the hidden or hard-to-see clues that reveal the children’s inner lives and guide the teacher in guiding children. For Montessori (1936/1992) the “simple but very precious truths,” glimpsed in attending carefully to children provide insights into the greater truths needed by humankind: “They become a bright light that will bring us a much better understanding of the complicated labyrinth that the social life of the adult represents” (p. 85).

Levinas (1972/2006) believes that any person who has truly seen the face of another person is called into an ethical relation with that Other and has, “no way to escape responsibility, no inner hiding place to go back into self.... The more I face up to my responsibilities the more I am responsible” (p. 34). As I attend to the words of other teachers, as I come face-to-face with the meanings they draw from their experiences with children in public Montessori schools, I am drawn outside of myself. I cross the threshold

that separates my inner life from theirs, and in that crossing I am changed. I enter into a new place, a different place, a place far from home where I am responsible for more than my own isolated existence.

Remote Places In a Far Sphere

In exploring the relationship between awareness of body and awareness of place, Casey (1993) provides a description of movement from near spheres to far spheres that resonates with my understanding of the transformational scope of my research project:

The “arc of reachability” sweeps out a circle of attainable things located in places belonging to the near sphere, while the “horizontal arc” draws us out of ourselves into increasingly remote places situated in the far sphere. The “tensional arc” sets forth the sheer difference between here and there. (p. 110)

Twenty-seven years ago I set out to learn how to be a Montessori teacher. After 18 years in classrooms, the ways-of-being within my reach are patience-with and attentiveness-to children, the ability to help them become excited about learning new things, and empathetic concern for the job of parents. These ways-of-being constitute my near sphere. I came to curriculum research because I feel drawn toward “remote places” – toward opportunities to provide leadership for younger teachers, and toward a broader understanding of educational philosophy and issues. Tensions arise within me, in a positive and constructive sense, from a yearning to tease apart my knotted understandings of what it takes to provide good learning experiences for both children and adults. These tensions enable me to begin to articulate insights I retrieve from my experiences with children and their parents in schools, as well as from memories of my own childhood.

In this first part of my project, I explore my near space, and begin to move into ‘horizontal arcs’ drawing me out of the bounds of my own perceptions into remote places as I delve into the ideas of educators, biographers, philosophers and poets. The next stage

of my pilgrimage is the gathering of accounts. In conversations with six Montessori teachers at three different public school sites I move beyond my own foremeanings as I listen receptively to the experiences of my conversants. In the summer of 2006, I contacted public school Montessori teachers in three school systems that have public Montessori school programs extending into the elementary grades. I am acquainted with teachers in all three sites who either agreed to participate in my study or referred me to other teachers. My participants are Montessori elementary teachers who have been teaching in public schools for at least three years. I identified six teachers who have teaching credentials from either the American Montessori Society or the Association Montessori Internationale, the two pre-eminent Montessori teacher preparation programs in the United States. Through email, in-person, and over-the-phone conversations with these potential participants, I shared the content of the invitation to participate (see Appendix A: Invitation to Participate). Those who agreed to participate reviewed and signed an informed consent form that articulates the details of participation and informs them of their rights as participants (see Appendix B: Informed Consent Form). Participants are identified by pseudonyms, and the locations of their schools are withheld to protect their anonymity.

During the months between June of 2006 and January of 2007, I entered into reflective conversations with these six Montessori public school teachers. Four are teachers I know from the years I recruited, observed and mentored teachers as Montessori Instructional Specialist in a sprawling urban school district. Having observed their teaching, I know each of their classrooms to be characterized by at least four hallmarks of a Montessori learning environment: their students work individually and in small groups

with diverse, hands-on activities; their classrooms have shelves of carefully organized Montessori materials; the teacher moves quietly around the classroom presenting engaging individual and small group lessons; and student/teacher interactions are calm and mutually respectful. I found two other teachers by contacting a trusted colleague who is an assistant principal at a Montessori public school, and asking her for the names of competent and experienced Montessori teachers in her school. I did not approach teachers with fewer than five years of experience, teachers in schools with a high rate of teacher-turnover, or teachers who seem to be struggling, because I thought conversations with new, discontented or struggling teachers would likely highlight a different set of phenomenological questions than the ones I propose to explore.

In deciding who to contact, I looked for variety among characteristics such as years of experience, grade level taught, type of public school and Montessori training experiences. Although a balance of such characteristics is not necessary for phenomenological inquiry, I felt variety would enrich my exploration of the phenomenon. The teachers I talked with have between 5 and 33 years of teaching experience. Three work with lower elementary children (first, second and third grade); three teach upper elementary children (fourth, fifth and sixth grade). Two work in a preK-eighth grade Magnet school in a large urban district, two in a preK-fifth grade “Countywide Alternative” school in a small, urban county, and two in a preK-eighth grade charter school in a small city. All are white. Five are women and one is a man. Men and are relatively rare in Montessori elementary schools, and the teachers in the public schools I drew from are predominantly white, with a small minority of teachers from Sri Lanka, and a few African American teachers with fewer than five years teaching

experience. Two of the teachers hold elementary teaching credentials from the Association Montessori Internationale (AMI); four hold elementary credentials from the American Montessori Society (AMS); three also hold early childhood (primary) credentials from either AMS or AMI. All six teachers also hold state teaching credentials. Two have been spent most of their adult lives as Montessori teachers. Three started out as traditional teachers. One switched from another career mid-life.

I first met with each participant individually for at least an hour and a half. Our meetings took place at spots that were quiet and mutually convenient, outside of school hours. Each conversation was audio-taped and transcribed. After beginning to interpretively explore themes that arose in these conversations, I met for a second time with each conversant for at least an hour, and audio-taped and transcribed these conversations, too. After the second conversations, I invited each conversant to write about ways that the words of Dr. Montessori guide and inspire their teaching lives. Finally, I held a group conversation with four of the six participants. One was unable to participate in the group conversation because of other commitments, and one came down with the flu. This group conversation, too, was audio-taped and transcribed.

Phenomenological conversations are unscripted and unstructured (van Manen, 2003), beginning with questions that seek to draw out descriptive narrative accounts of particular, situated experiences. Questions I asked to initiate or broaden the initial conversation included:

What led you to become a Montessori teacher?

What drew you to teaching in public schools?

Can you describe a particularly vivid moment in your classroom when you felt you were “on the right track?”

What particular experiences do you feel draw you away from the Montessori way-of-being with children? What is it like to be a Montessori teacher in the face of these circumstances?

Can you tell me about an experience in public schools during which your Montessori teaching practices were either challenged or supported?

My questions seek to draw out what van Manen (2003) calls “narrative material that may serve as a resource for developing a richer and deeper understanding” (p. 66). During our second conversations, questions were different for each teacher, and arose from what we talked about in the first conversations. The group conversation quickly took on a life of its own, with teachers posing questions to each other. Levin (1989) describes the kind of openness required in phenomenological conversations: “It requires, among other things, the capacity to be touched and moved by what one sees, and the capacity to listen carefully and with an open mind” (p. 102).

In the next three chapters, through the process of writing and rewriting, I search for ways to express what I encounter in what Casey (1993) calls “remote places situated in the far sphere” (p. 110). Chapter Four traces the journey of each teacher to Montessori, and explores their transformational experiences in Montessori training courses. Chapter Five follows the teachers into Montessori classrooms where each explores their personal understandings of what it means to “follow the child.” Chapter Six journeys with them into public Montessori schools, and they describe what it is like to teach in a space where Montessori and traditional pedagogical orientations co-exist side-by-side. Finally, in Chapter Seven, I return to Noddings’ active phase of learning to address the question, “*How shall I act upon it?*” as I explore possibilities for dwelling in creative tension in the lines of flight between competing horizons.

CHAPTER FOUR: ENTERING PILGRIM PATHWAYS

How do we know where we are going?
How do we know where we are headed
till we in fact or hope or hunch
arrive?...

Navigating by chart and chance
and passion I will know the shape
of the mountains of freedom, I will know. (Piercy, 1994, pp. 273-274)

A pilgrim's journey is traveled on pathways marked out by the questing journeys of earlier travelers, but pilgrim pathways are new to each who walks upon them. Each sets out in response to a call from her or his own heart, and each must respond to the soul's longings alone. For the six teachers who conversed with me, becoming a Montessorian is the beginning of a pilgrimage toward "an idea of ... harmony between the child and the adult" (Montessori, as cited in Standing, 1957/1998, p. 77). Each teacher hears stories about the Montessori philosophy, catches glimpses of this way of teaching, and decides to embark on a pilgrimage of becoming. Each begins a hopeful journey in search of "the mountains of freedom," a place where truths are not easily charted, a questioning place where teachers and students navigate together "by chart and chance and passion."

As I explore the beginnings of the teachers' journeys, I find myself in the heart of my own pilgrimage into the question: **What is the lived experience of Montessori teachers, guiding and being guided by students in Montessori public school classrooms?** The teachers and I explore together what they mean when they name themselves Montessori teachers and their classrooms Montessori environments. As they talk about what it is like to both guide and follow children, we follow the pathways suggested by the language they use. And winding within and around these pathways, we

uncover crossroads that lead to detours in public schools. On these crossroads, the teachers encounter state tests, public school jargon, administrative observations, a standardized curriculum, and day-to-day decisions about when to bring public school ideas into their classrooms. They also decide when to avoid detours and stay on the tried and true pathways marked out by earlier Montessorians.

In this chapter, I recount the story of each teacher's decision to step onto the pilgrim pathways of Montessori teaching. In the Chapter Five we explore together the terrain of their experiences as Montessori teachers. They voice their understandings of what it means to be in a quiet universe helping children find their work and gain understandings of who they are in the world, to live by the Montessorian's credo, "follow the child," and, as one teacher says, to experience the thrill of creating an environment in which children "grow and not just grow high – grow out, have their hearts grow bigger." In Chapter Six, I follow my conversants into public schools, and they talk about, in the words of another teacher, the need to "keep talking and ... to keep negotiating what Montessori is." They speak of hearing many competing voices, puzzling over state standards, encountering administrative observations, worrying about "the Test," and stumbling at times as they encounter interruptions to the flow of learning. They tell of a sense of fragmentation, of struggling, as one says, "to stay centered on this sand bar that is in some ways slipping away, going out to the ocean." And they express a sense that the lessons gained in training provide a never ending source of insight, inspiration and guidance. In the final chapter, I reflect on broader implications of the experiences of these teachers as they illuminate tensions and possibilities for teaching and learning in public school Montessori classrooms and beyond.

Journeys to New Beginnings

It is generally more correct to say that we fall into conversation, or even that we become involved in it... A conversation has a spirit of its own, ... that allows something to “emerge” which henceforth exists. (Gadamer, 1960/2003, p. 383)

The time I spent with these six teachers took the form of conversations rather than structured interviews. Our talks had an open-ended quality, a spirit of their own. The word conversation comes from an Indo-European root: *wert*, meaning to turn or wind. *Wert* also gives rise to words like inward, toward, and divert that evoke images of reflective journeys (*American Heritage Dictionary*, 2000). The French word *converser* refers to dwelling in or with, but its Latin root, *conversare* has the sense of turning oneself about, and moving to and fro. Entering into conversation, we turn our attention outward and dwell with the thoughts of others. We question. We listen. We respond. We move to and fro on winding pathways between our own thoughts and the words we share. We are diverted beyond our own perspectives by the conversation moving to and fro between us, and by glimpses we catch of each other’s inward worlds.

As I fall into conversation with the six teachers, I experience a sense of joining them on a thought-provoking journey. I listen with rapt attention as they unfold images of their lives in the classroom. We turn toward each other. Each of us gazes inward and then reaches outward. We share our inner lives. Our conversations start with my question, “What led you to become a Montessori teacher?” As Gadamer suggests, the question causes “something to ‘emerge’ which henceforth exists.” For each teacher, the story of journeying to Montessori seems to hold deep personal significance. I retell their stories here (the names used are pseudonyms) to introduce each conversant.

Margaret

Intense eyes, vigilant loyalty to the Montessori philosophy, and a sweet sensitivity to the needs of others characterize Margaret. She is the mother of two teenage children, both in high school at the time we speak. Her journey to Montessori was long and winding. She started her career as a traditional teacher. Straight out of college she taught two years in high school, then joined the Peace Corps with her husband. They spent several years in Cameroon and Nigeria where they became fascinated with the many ways various people approach knowledge and learning. When they returned to the U.S. they became involved in graduate studies in public policy analysis, and found themselves deeply interested in questions of self-governance, as Margaret relates:

We are guided from within, and that governance comes from within, so when we say the government we're talking about people, and when we're talking about people we're talking about their inner growth, their inner ideas. Governance ... means to be able to govern ourselves within society, whatever form that takes.

When their son became of age to go to school, they came across a Montessori school and enrolled him. Margaret was fascinated:

They had an observation room so you could go inside and watch. So I just went into the observation room and watched and watched, and was totally fascinated.... This little universe was self-governed!... I just watched and watched for three years while we were there. And really loved how he was becoming himself and that journey-of-becoming himself.... It was the most wonderful gift ... to see what he was choosing.

For a while Margaret substitute-taught at a private Montessori school. Eventually she returned to full time teaching in a public International Baccalaureate elementary school. All this time she was “soaking up philosophy and reading and talking to other teachers.” She found herself comparing her children’s experiences in Montessori with their experiences in traditional school:

Here's one of the defining moments about me deciding how I really had to check into this philosophy. My daughter, I asked her, "How was your day?" ... And she told me that she stayed on green all day long. And I said, "Oh!" They had this discipline chart, and they had different colors. And here we are in historic Charlotte and the bad color was black! She said, "I didn't get on black today. I stayed on green." I'm thinking, this is what my child learned first! She stayed on green all day! Or that she got a yellow. And it was devastating.

Margaret realized, "I was looking for a framework and a philosophy that would encompass what I had seen in Montessori." She wanted something more resonant with her sensitivity to self-governance and her respect for how other people in the world approach knowledge: "I came to a point where I was really just so curious that I wanted to follow through." So when her family moved again, and she found herself settled within driving distance of a Montessori teacher education center, she took training and became a Montessori teacher.

Andrew

Andrew is earnest as he tells the story of his journey to Montessori, yet he speaks with a wry sense of humor. He is a young man in his mid-thirties, characterized by subtle intensity. His current job as a Montessori public charter school teacher is his second teaching position. His first teaching job, just after he finished college with a teaching degree, was in an alternative public high school. Here he was attentive to the voices of administrators urging him to focus on preparing students for tests. However, over time, he found himself questioning this focus on assessment:

I was pretty entrenched in the traditional educational ... assessment tools. How do we know they're learning? Over my years, I started to notice that the assessment pieces that all the administrators were trying to hound me about were not the key to learning. Imagine my surprise!

When the children had an interest in ... the area that you were studying, when they would gravitate to a concept and make it theirs, that's when they learned the most.... And then I started to notice that these, what

people call high school dropouts, ... were starting to do their social studies work at break, at their free time. And I thought, "Okay, I'm on to something. What am I doing?"

When he met his wife, a Montessori teacher, she introduced him to Montessori's ideas. They spent long hours talking about educational philosophies and Andrew went to see her classroom. Then he visited an elementary Montessori classroom and attended a Montessori conference:

I saw the materials and they just called to me, the way it was done.... I was just amazed by it.... In that conference I was sort of back and forth and discussing philosophy and it took me a long time to see.... And then there was something in me, that I just stood up and said, "Why can't all children have this type of education?" At that moment I realized that's what I wanted to do.

The conference led indirectly to an opportunity to teach in a Montessori charter school, and Andrew decided to become a Montessori teacher: "I made my decision to do it.... All the wheels were in motion, and there I was sitting in that ... room over there doing my Montessori training."

Trixie

Friendly and matter-of-fact, Trixie describes her journey to Montessori as a "kind of circuitous route." Trixie is in her mid-fifties. Like Margaret, she first found Montessori as a young mother:

I put my daughter into primary Montessori ... when she was two and a half. And I thought it was fantastic. I loved it. And just fell in love with the program. When she got finished with primary they didn't give us a lot of information on elementary and I just put her in traditional schools, much to my later chagrin.

Trixie was a designer with her own business for many years before she found herself serendipitously drawn back into Montessori. A friend asked her to help out in a

private Montessori school classroom where a new teacher was struggling with routines and organization:

I had no education background. Nothing. My degree is in music. I have a double major in music and political science. What made me fall in love with it was when I went and I saw an elementary classroom.... And I fell in love with the math materials.... It was the math stuff that I thought was the most wonderful thing I'd ever seen.... And by the end of the year I really was convinced that it was the right way to go, for children.

After her year in the classroom the school offered her a job, which she accepted. And so they put her through training. "And that's how I became a Montessori teacher."

Anne

Anne is an elegant, thoughtful woman, who has worked as a Montessori teacher for nearly 35 years in both private and public Montessori schools. Her story of coming to Montessori echoes the sense of discovery and awed watching voiced by Margaret. Like Margaret, Anne was working in a graduate program studying groups when she first encountered Montessori:

I was studying ... groups of people, demography.... And we got to do a demographic study, ... and someone suggested that I go to a classroom. And then there was this graduate student whose wife worked at a Montessori class. So he said, "Oh, you really have to go to my wife's class. It's really neat, it's a Montessori class." And I didn't know anything about it.

Anne visited the class many times. Montessori's philosophy resonated with her academic interest in the study of groups:

I was really fascinated by the study of groups and all the literature that was out, and used to read a lot. So I went and I fell in love with it. I wanted to know everybody and everything about it. So I went back many times and watched.... And I really wanted to be that.

She went to the training, "just loved it the whole time I was there," and became a Montessori teacher.

Emma

Emma is a young woman in her mid-thirties, intense, forthright, and highly articulate. She tells the story of how she came to Montessori with a kind of amused wonderment. Her major in college was anthropology, and she never planned to become a teacher. But around the time she was finishing her program she had a chance encounter with a Montessori teacher that changed the course of her life:

I was finishing up school ... and I was also practicing Buddhism at a Buddhist meditation center. One night while I was there I met this woman who happened to be a Montessori teacher. And we sat down after class for tea. And she was talking about how fantastic it was teaching Montessori and just how good she felt about it.

And I was finishing up school, and I kind of knew I wasn't going to get a job as an anthropologist unless I went for a Ph.D. So I decided to look into Montessori training.... I loved the order and the structure for the primary classroom and it really fit with the Buddhism that I was practicing at the time. So I just figured, okay, I'll do this.

Emma is attracted to Montessori's idea that human beings have an innate drive to learn, and the way that Montessori views human cognition seemed to mirror her studies of both Buddhism and anthropology:

This is how the human mind works. I thought it was just really powerful to say we can look at human beings and we know that they're going to go through these stages of development, and it doesn't matter where you go, if you run into a baby at a year and a half, these are the kinds of things that you'll see. And it was just really powerful.

She decided to attend a Montessori teacher training course offered by a nearby University as part of a Master's of Education program, and a year later when she finished the program she started her first job as a Montessori teacher:

But this is the really cool part of my story. I got my first job ... and on the first day of school I got there and ... all the teachers were standing outside. And the woman who told me about Montessori was standing there! ... I hadn't laid eyes on her since that night that she talked me into Montessori. And there she was! It was Karma.... I think that night she had

showed up at the Buddhist center was just this weird fluke for her, not something that she really pursued, other than that one night she was there. It was just really strange.

Ruth

Ruth, in her mid-fifties, is bubbly, talkative, and enthusiastic about her job. Her journey to Montessori took decades, circling between traditional teaching and work in Montessori schools. When she graduated from college with a teaching degree, she got married and took a memorable journey across the ocean to join her husband at his new Naval post in Italy. There she taught a class of three year olds in a NATO school that had a Montessori class. It wasn't a typical Montessori class because the school divided the children by age, rather than grouping three, four and five year olds in the same class. At the school's urging, she took a correspondence course that provided information about how to use the Montessori materials. However, she wasn't able to make sense of it: "The correspondence course came to me and it was very little philosophy and mostly just how to use the materials and the materials that they talked about I didn't have."

When she returned home, Ruth embarked on a successful and fulfilling teaching career in a traditional public elementary school. She taught every grade from first through sixth, including a mixed age group. At one point, she convinced her principal to let her keep her students for two years. The concept of the open classroom was evolving and she gravitated to that, establishing learning centers and a reading program that allowed children to work independently.

Many years later Ruth's husband accepted employment in a new area. Here she found a job at a nursery school with a partial Montessori program like the one in Italy. The Montessori students were divided by age, and the school had a traditional class for

parents who weren't comfortable with the Montessori method. Ruth was the traditional teacher for four year olds:

It was kind of strange. It was half Montessori and half traditional, which was really unusual. There were Montessori teachers and there were traditional teachers. I used to pride myself that I was just as good a teacher as the Montessori teacher, who thought she was terrific. I could teach all the exact same things, and teach them all their sounds and all those kinds of things, and have fun with the kids, and they were happy and they were learning and I could teach them things that she wasn't even teaching them. And I felt really good about that.

When the nursery school decided to become a regular Montessori program, the owner arranged for Ruth to attend a Montessori teacher training program:

So I was very pleased. I wasn't quite sure about it, but I thought, ... I'll just go, and I'll enjoy it, and I'll see what everybody thinks is so terrific.... All the manipulative stuff ... kind of thrilled me.... I figured, well, I'll go and I'll see. It doesn't mean I have to become one, it doesn't mean I have to do it.

Well, while I was taking my training I totally fell in love with the Montessori philosophy. I was really into it and I knew that this was all the things that I had been trying to do, in a way that I could now do them. And so, that was like ... coming home.

On the Point of Departure

Each teacher begins the journey that brings them to teaching in Montessori schools from a different place. Ruth, Andrew, and Margaret start their careers as traditional teachers. Emma, Anne and Margaret are students of the human sciences. Trixie is a young mother with a design studio. Each crosses the path of Montessori teachers in some way. Margaret and Trixie lovingly watch their children's journeys-of-becoming in Montessori schools. Friends invite Andrew and Anne to visit Montessori classrooms. Ruth's professional teaching life circles in and out of contact with Montessorians. Emma, a young student studying Buddhism, has a Karmic encounter with a Montessori teacher over tea.

Then for each teacher a moment of decision comes, and each makes a choice to move forward, to set out on a journey into the world of Montessori schools, to become a Montessori teacher. For years Margaret talks with other teachers, reads and soaks up philosophy, until finally she becomes so curious that she wants to follow through. Andrew listens to his wife and talks with her, visits a Montessori classroom and thinks about what he sees, and suddenly he feels called to stand up in support of this kind of school. At his moment of decision, he knows this is what he wants to do. Emma drinks tea with a new acquaintance, and hears stories that call her to find out more about this way of teaching. Trixie falls in love with the Montessori materials, especially the wonderful math materials in an elementary classroom and over time she becomes convinced that this way of teaching is “the right way to go, for children.” Anne lingers in the first Montessori classroom she visits: “I fell in love with it. I wanted to know everybody and everything about it. So I went back many times and watched.... And I really wanted to be that.”

Their life journeys bring all six teachers to a moment where they feel drawn-in to this different kind of classroom and new way-of-being with children; they decide to seek a teaching life in Montessori schools. How do they name and talk about the paths that carry them to Montessori? In what ways does this new way-of-life resonate with what came before in their lives?

Being Called by Landscapes Beyond

In *homesteading*, I journey to a new place.... I commit myself to remaining in the new place for a stretch of time sufficient for building a significant future life there.... A second beginning is implied insofar as ... we also look *forward* to what is to come, as is exemplified in homesteading. (Casey, 1993, pp. 290-293)

Casey's reflections on homesteading resonate with the accounts of coming to Montessori told by all six teachers, because becoming a Montessori teacher is both an end of a journey and a beginning of a questing way-of-life in their stories. As they talk about this way-of-life, the teachers' words express a sense of what it is like to be called to teach in the Montessori way. Passing through educational spaces of childhood, university years and beyond, each teacher seeks a new beginning in the Montessori philosophy. A landscape of beautiful materials, happy children and a way-of-life dedicated to sensitive awareness of children's growth and development calls them to begin anew here. For each, a moment comes when something calls them to pause in life's journey, to linger, talk, watch, re-think the meaning of teaching, and enter a teaching life from a different perspective.

Aoki (2005a) recounts a story that illuminates the teachers' moments of recognition. In his story, he lingers on a bridge across a small stream in a Japanese garden in Vancouver. The bridge, simple and well-trodden, calls to visitors to pause in their travels. Aoki tells us:

The bridge gathers into a unity the hundred iris plants in the shallow water reaching for the sunbeams that pass through the foliage of the pines sheltering the bridge, the landscapes beyond that acknowledge their bond with the bridge and the sky above, and the strollers themselves. (p. 438)

Lingering on the well-trodden bridge brings a shift in Aoki's awareness of the landscape around him. Lingering, thinking, watching and talking about the pedagogical philosophy called Montessori teaching causes a shift in the teachers' perceptions; suddenly teaching makes sense to them in a new way. Montessori's ideas are like Aoki's (2005a) bridge for them, gathering into a unity experiences and events in their lives, and sending them across into "landscapes beyond," on their way to a new homestead. What are the ways

they name the call of the landscape before them, and what meaning do they take from the vistas they perceive as they set out to become Montessori teachers?

A Call to Teach

For Emma, coming to Montessori is a spiritual gift: it is Karma. A new acquaintance tells her about her life as a Montessori teacher, and her stories call to Emma. Karma derives from the Sanskrit word *kwer*, meaning to make (*American Heritage Dictionary*, 2000). Called to learn more about Montessori teaching, Emma sets out on a journey that leads her to make a life as a Montessori teacher. Margaret and Trixie experience a gift as they watch their children's journeys-of-becoming; Ruth falls in love with the Montessori philosophy; Anne and Andrew are fascinated as they watch and learn. Each, like Emma, is called to make a new life.

Huebner (1999d) exploring teaching as vocation, tells us that the Latin root of "vocation" means a call or summons: "A vocation is not simply being called forth; it is also being called by. We are not called merely to be something other than we are, nor are we called by some mysterious force beyond us" (p. 380). A call, from the Old Norse *kalla*, meaning to summon, name, or claim (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 2003), is felt by each teacher. The teachers feel a claim being made on them as they hear others naming what it means to be a Montessori teacher. They are summoned by a way-of-being with children, and each teacher's story links that summons to what came before in their life journeys. Emma, looking back on her life before her Karmic encounter, realizes that although she never saw herself becoming a teacher when she was growing up, she always liked school and enjoyed being with children:

When I look back on growing up, I always babysat. Through college I was always a nanny. And I always really loved children around age three....

Looking back, there was a career day, ... and I chose to go to a nursery school.... I always loved school, and my birthday is in early September, and so I always mark a year, my years always start, in September. And so, being a teacher is natural for me.

The call to become a Montessori teacher, to settle in this Montessori homestead, arises from each teacher's life experiences, gathered into a unity at a moment of recognition. Emma finds, "A lot of what happens to me in my life, I think, is just little messages people plant." Sipping tea, listening to stories about life as a Montessori teacher, she hears a message in the stories, and recognizes that becoming a Montessori teacher is right for her. Margaret's interest in self-governance arises from her experiences in the Peace Corps in Africa, and her moment of recognition comes in watching the self-governing universe in her son's Montessori classroom. Andrew, already journeying reflectively on the path of teaching, discovers new vistas when his wife tells him about her understandings of Montessori educational philosophy. He recounts the moment he feels called; something within causes him to stand up, saying, "Why can't all children have this type of education?" Ruth comes to a realization that Montessori is like home to her, a place where she can do everything with children she has been trying to do. Anne tells of loving the study of groups, falling in love with Montessori, wanting to know everybody and everything about it and knowing that she "really wanted to be that."

The journey into landscapes beyond begins with a moment of recognition that calls the teachers to teach in a different way. Something causes each one to pause, refocus, and see landscape and sky in new ways. The choice they make to become Montessori teachers provides a bridge between who they are and who they might become. Heidegger (1993a) metaphorically explores ways that bridges initiate and guide movement from place to place in our lives:

The bridge swings over the stream “with ease and power.” It does not just connect banks that are already there. The banks emerge as banks only as the bridge crosses the stream.... The bridge *gathers* the earth as landscape around the stream. Thus it guides and attends the stream through the meadows. (p. 354)

What came before in the teachers’ lives “gathers into a unity” (Aoki, 2005a) that connects past experiences with new possibilities. The life bridge they cross as they decide to become Montessori teachers connects who they are with who they feel they might become, and in making that connection, the bridge brings both being and becoming into focus.

Each teacher feels called by Montessori’s ideas to set out on a journey-of-becoming, a sort of pilgrimage. This pilgrimage does not go full circle and return the teachers to their beginning homeplaces, however. It leads across a bridge to a new place that fits with who they already are, yet provides new landscapes, new ways of seeing teaching, new vistas of becoming. The bridge itself, the choice they make to respond to a call and set out on pilgrimage, becomes a guide that stays with them as they journey into landscapes beyond.

A Call to a Watching and Waiting Way-of-Life

Margaret and Anne both name watching Montessori classrooms as the bridge that summons them to explore new terrains. Anne visits a Montessori classroom and wants “to know everybody and everything about it.” Watching, she decides she really wants to be a Montessori teacher. Margaret is drawn-in to a Montessori way-of-being as she watches her little son in a Montessori classroom, feeling that the experience of watching his journey-of-becoming is a great gift. Over time she becomes so curious about what she sees that she leaves her work in academia and traditional teaching behind and enters into a new way-of-life:

I've always seen Montessori as being a sort of all-encompassing philosophy that really is a way-of-life – a way of living life. It doesn't stop when you leave the class – when I leave the classroom or when the kids leave the classroom.... This is a way-of-life. I don't pack this all up at 5:00 and go home, and not think about it anymore. It just flows with me.

Margaret, called by watching to learn more about Montessori, spends years lingering, talking and thinking before she sets off across her bridge to journey into this new landscape. For her, watching and waiting remain important gifts she receives daily in her life as a Montessori teacher:

The principle of observation – being able to stand back and really take a look at what's going on, ... rather than just rushing in unthinkingly ... just fixing things.... I need to watch it, and I need to look and see. I need to wait.... It actually builds in a kind of a waiting, humbling process.

For Margaret, being a Montessori teacher is about watching, waiting, standing back and really taking a look at things. Watching, she waits; but she does not withdraw. Her watching is participatory and anticipatory. It is a kind of respectful and receptive attentiveness. She does not decide in advance everything the children need to learn on a given day, then test to see if they are learning according to her plan. She tells stories, shows pictures, and talks with her students. Then, when she glimpses connections being made, she rejoices in the flow of learning that goes on as her students become interested in their world:

So part of me, as the guide, watching that flow, ... is watching the gifts that the children give back.... This year we're studying ancient Mali, ... and [a child] sat on the playground one day and he took three hula hoops and he said, "That's the color of the Mali flag!"... There was no real direct instruction on that. And he just absorbed that and he reapplied it somewhere else. That's the gift. He's giving that gift back to us. Not directly, but indirectly. He has made a connection.

Margaret accepts and celebrates the gift of what is revealed when she watches a child spontaneously making connections. It is enough to see glimpses of her students'

journeys-of-becoming; she does not try to control every aspect of the journey. As Montessori (1945/1970) advises, she watches and waits in order to be sure she is not jumping in and interfering in ways that will “erase the designs the child makes in the soft wax of his inner life” (p. 57). Her humble waiting and watching protect the children’s inner worlds, even as she offers experiences to help them connect to the larger world.

Abram (1996) talks about the destructive potential of prying too aggressively into interior worlds:

The clay bowl resting on the table in front of me meets my eyes with its curved and grainy surface.... Its very existence as a bowl ensures that there are dimensions wholly inaccessible to me – most obviously the patterns hidden *between* its glazed and unglazed surfaces, the interior density of its clay body. If I break it into pieces, in hopes of discovering these interior patterns or the delicate structure of its molecular dimensions, I will have destroyed its integrity as a bowl. (p. 51)

Abram’s study of the bowl, whose interior dimensions are wholly inaccessible, metaphorically illuminates one aspect of the Montessori way-of-being that calls to both Anne and Margaret. They watch their students in a non-intrusive way. They step back. They wait, and try to be sure they really see what is going on before they step in. They are watching for the non-visible, for clues to their students’ inner lives. They have learned to honor that which is hidden from view, to watch respectfully for signs of inner growth, without probing in ways that might destroy the integrity of childhood experiences.

The watching way-of-life that calls them is a kind of focused perception that is both receptive and active. Margaret brings the study of ancient Mali to her class. She thinks about what kinds of experiences might engage her students’ interests, and presents these experiences. Then she watches what the children do with her offerings. But what she watches for is not their acquisition of a set body of knowledge. She watches for

elusive, hidden connections that reveal a flow of meaning between pedagogical experiences and the patterns and delicate structures of the child's inner world. And when she sees children making connections between what she offers and their own lives, she feels she has received a gift. Her observations are made in a spirit of inquiry very different from the Cartesian research methods Jardine (1998) describes:

The tendency in some areas of educational theory and practice has been towards specification, univocity, clarification, and essentially, the overcoming of ambiguity.... The deep difficulties in living our lives with children are often ... understood as *problems to be fixed*, things to be "cleared up" through the diligent pursuit of research which takes as its first gesture a fundamental severance with its object of inquiry so that it can heed only its own desire for clarity and distinctness which then *demand*s clarity and distinctness from that object. (p. 11)

Margaret and Anne are called by a way of teaching that asks teachers to stand back and watch, rather than "rushing in unthinkingly ... just fixing things." Although they stand back as they watch, they do not distance themselves emotionally from their students. They do not feel called to demand "clarity and distinctness" from the object of their watching, their students. They are engaged and receptive, respectful of the hidden, inner life they try to support. They are humbled, and they are grateful when they receive the gift of glimpses of their students' inner lives.

A Call from the Heart

Like Margaret, Andrew names his Montessori homestead as a way-of-being, and his story of becoming a Montessori teacher reveals another aspect of watching students' inner lives unfold. He experiences a wave of familiarity and resonance in visits to Montessori classrooms and a Montessori conference: "There was something in me, that I just stood up and said, 'Why can't all children have this type of education?' At that moment I realized that's what I wanted to do." He suddenly feels called by this

philosophy that values and supports the kind of independent exploration he sees in his high school students when they truly embrace a learning experience and make it their own. Learning about the Montessori philosophy calls him to journey into a new landscape that is somehow familiar: “It’s a very intangible thing. It’s a philosophy. It’s a way-of-being.... A certain thing in your heart that wants that freedom-loving, exploring type of environment for children.”

Andrew turns with his heart to this way-of-being. When he speaks of watching his students’ understandings unfold, what he recalls is watching them discover their “cosmic task of seeing something larger than themselves.” Andrew’s watching is heart work, the kind of work Rilke (1934/1995) urges:

For there is a boundary to looking.
And the world that is looked at so deeply
wants to flourish in love.

Work of the eyes is done, now
go and do heart work. (p. 129)

Rilke tells of a boundary, an edge place, where looking deeply at the world distances the observer from that world, a world that “wants to flourish in love.” Across that edge place, beyond the work of eyes, he sees possibilities for “heart work,” work that crosses boundaries between watcher and watched. As Andrew, Anne and Margaret speak of watching, their words do not objectify students and hold them at a distance. They do not tell stories of categorizing, counting, comparing and analyzing. They speak of looking at their students deeply, from the heart. They watch for ways to provide an environment for freedom and exploration where their students can flourish; they look for moments when students make connections to the world and perceive something in the world that is larger than themselves.

The heart work that calls to Andrew is not oriented to the kind of methodical educational thinking expressed in state standards, curriculum frameworks, plan books, checklists, rubrics, benchmark assessments and grade books. As Jardine (1998) says:

When the living character of education is rendered by a desire for clarity and distinctness, ... we render children into strange and silent objects which require of us only management, manipulation and objective information and (ac)countability. Children are no longer our kin, our kind; teaching is no longer an act of “kindness” and generosity bespeaking a deep connectedness with children. (p. 7)

Students are not “strange and silent objects” to Margaret, Anne and Andrew. All three teachers speak of a way-of-being lived close to children. Andrew describes Montessori as “a certain thing in your heart that wants that freedom-loving, exploring type of environment for children.” These teachers and their students inhabit a shared universe in which they seek their “cosmic task of seeing something larger than themselves.” The teachers watch from their hearts for ways to help children find that cosmic task.

The teachers are called by deeply receptive heart work that goes beyond looking at students’ skills, academic strengths, time on task, and content mastery. Like phenomenologists, Montessori teachers seek understanding that arises from what van Manen (2003) calls an objectivity, not of separation, but of orientation. His description of phenomenological research resonates with the heart work that calls to Andrew:

Phenomenological research and writing is a project in which the normal scientific requirement or standards of objectivity and subjectivity are not mutually exclusive categories.... “Objectivity” means that the researcher is *oriented* to ... that which stands in front of him or her.... The researcher becomes in a sense a guardian and a defender of the true nature of the object.... “Subjectivity” means that one needs to be as perceptive, insightful, and discerning as one can be.... Subjectivity means that we are *strong* in our orientation to the object of study *in a unique and personal way*. (p. 20)

Andrew, Anne and Margaret tell of a way-of-being that focuses on children's cosmic work with an objectivity that seeks to be "a guardian and a defender of the true nature" of that work, and a subjectivity that pours itself into a passionate effort to be "perceptive, insightful, and discerning." Their watching is attentive, and humble, but they are not distanced observers of the children. They are active. They are involved. They prepare lessons, tell stories, organize experiences, and guide exploration. Their watching is in the service of helping their students to "flourish in love." The work of their eyes is in the service of a call to "heart work."

A Call from the Beautiful

Beauty is not just a call to growth, it is a transforming presence wherein we unfold towards growth almost before we realize it. Our deepest self-knowledge unfolds as we are embraced by Beauty.... The Beautiful ... coaxes the souls to the land of wonder where the journey becomes a bright path between source and horizon, awakening and surrender. (O'Donohue, 2004, pp. 8-9)

Trixie, Andrew and Ruth name the beautiful materials as elements in the Montessori landscape that beckon them to cross into new landscapes of teaching. Ruth is thrilled by the materials. Trixie "fell in love with the math materials.... the most wonderful thing I'd ever seen." Andrew "saw the materials and they just called to me." The beauty of the Montessori materials calls to them as "a transforming presence wherein we unfold towards growth." The words of these teachers resonate with feelings I, too, had when I first encountered a Montessori classroom. Something about the Montessori materials thrilled me; they make visible and clarify ideas that I learned abstractly in my own school years. The number 1000 is presented as a beautiful, shining, smooth cube made of 1000 sparkling beads; in another math material, these sparkling beads appear as a long chain that makes all the beads visible and countable in a flowing, rhythmic, 10

times 10 times 10. Long division is practiced with colorful beads and cups, warm wooden boards, and small transparent tubes, each of which holds exactly 10 brightly colored wooden beads. History is presented on long, beautifully illustrated timelines. The materials draw the eye, and invite fingers to touch, hands to grasp, minds to explore. As Emma says, they are a valuable resource for Montessori teachers trying to capture and focus the interest of children:

The materials are really your tools. And the materials are attractive and purposeful. And so, that really creates a curiosity, I think, that might not otherwise be there.

Montessori (1916/2002) writes about the evolution of these materials in her earliest classroom:

I happened to notice a little girl of about three years old deeply absorbed in a set of solid insets, removing the wooden cylinders from their respective holes and replacing them. The expression on the child's face was one of such concentrated attention that it seemed to me an extraordinary manifestation. (p. 53)

Montessori begins to record instances of concentrated attention, and to try different materials, to see which ones attract and hold the children's focused attention:

By increasing the dimensions gradually, we arrive at the limit of size when these objects will fix the attention; then such objects excite an activity which becomes permanent, and the resulting exercise becomes a factor of development... It is the same with colors and with every kind of quality. (1916/2002, p. 58)

Montessori observes a polarization of attention as children interact with the materials, and it seems to her that this concentration of attention transforms the children:

Each time that such a polarization of attention took place, the child began to be completely transformed, to become calmer, more intelligent, and more expansive.... It was as if in a saturated solution, a point of crystallization had formed, ... producing a crystal of wonderful forms. (p. 54)

Rose Montgomery-Whicher's (2002) description of the effect of beauty on her artistic consciousness echoes Montessori's sense that the experience of focused and appreciative perception has a transformational effect on the personality:

Seeing a beautiful sight – whether a landscape, object or person makes me want to do something about it! It is not enough just to look: I must respond to the invitation the sight offers me by doing something.... I find myself looking at the world with new eyes.... It is not just the obviously “beautiful” that draws me, but everything, even the most ordinary things, pull me to look and wonder. (p. 42)

Trixie, Andrew and Ruth are called by the beauty of the materials. The materials Montessori created to attract and hold children's attention in order to transform and expand their consciousness also transform and expand the consciousness of these teachers. Beauty draws them “to look and wonder.” As they are embraced by the beauty of the materials, their souls are called to journey “between source and horizon, awakening and surrender” (O'Donohue, 2004, pp. 8-9). The materials call the teacher to think about teaching in a new way. Their understandings unfold as they are drawn-in to new horizons by the perception of beauty.

Montessori (1936/1992) sees the wholeness of humankind's being revealed when hands interact with the things in their world: “The human hand, so delicate and so complicated, not only allows the mind to reveal itself but enables the whole being to enter into special relationships with its environment” (p. 81). She comes to believe that when she observed the little girl fixing her attention so raptly on the cylinder activity, she caught a glimpse of a universal and profoundly important phenomenon:

It made one think of the *life of man* which may remain diffused among a multiplicity of things ... until some special thing attracts it intensely and fixes it; and then man is revealed unto himself, he feels that he has begun to live. (1936/1992, p. 54)

In this story about a little girl's concentration, Montessori celebrates the ability of hands to bring the mind to a state of focused attentiveness, and she finds that such attentiveness brings people to an understanding of who they are and what it means to live in the world their hands touch. Heidegger (1993f), too, finds that humankind's ability to live a thoughtful life is born in the work of hands as they reach out to touch and interact with the world:

The hand does not only grasp and catch, or push and pull. The hand reaches and extends, receives and welcomes.... The hand holds. The hand carries. The hand designs and signs.... The hand's gestures run everywhere through language.... Every motion of the hand in every one of its works carries itself through the element of thinking, every bearing of the hand bears itself in that element. All the work of the hand is rooted in thinking. (pp. 380-381)

Levin (1987) draws on Heidegger's writings about the hand as he explores touching, feeling, attentiveness and tact as related capacities. He asks, "What *is* our capacity to be touched, and moved, by that which we are given for our touching?" (p. 252):

Feeling is our most tactful way into the opening depth of things. Touching with respect, handling with tact, we have things whole and intact. And we let them yield their more intangible nature, their deeper and otherwise inaccessible nature. ... Touching presupposes our capacity to be touched. (p. 252)

For Levin, touching and being touched allow us to experience the world "whole and intact." The beauty of the Montessori materials, as they invite the hand to reach out and touch, also invites the inner self to be touched by the beauty of living in the world. As O'Donohue says, beauty "offers us an invitation to order, coherence and unity," and "when these needs are met, the soul feels at home in the world" (2004, p. 5). When they see the beautiful Montessori materials, Andrew, Ruth and Trixie are called to set out on a journey to find their souls' homes. Like Aoki's bridge, the materials in Montessori classrooms attract and fix their attention, gathering the world into a unity. They linger on

the perceptual bridge formed by the beautiful materials, and hearken to a call to set out on a journey that takes them to a new way of being. The beauty of the materials touches them, and beckons to them, and the path they want to travel is revealed.

A Call of an *Ethos*

Like Andrew, Ruth experiences Montessori's ideas as familiar, like a home where she can do all the things with children she had been trying to do for many years in her non-traditional approaches to teaching within public school classrooms:

This [involved] all the things that I had been trying to do, in a way that I could now do them. And so, that was ... like coming home.

Casey (1993) recounts a similar sense of *déjà vu* in homesteading:

By the time we end and linger in a certain place, that place has become a habitat for us, a familiar place we have come to know (or to re-know)... We find ourselves at ease and at home in this kind of place; here we can be "ethical" in the originary sense of this word, which implies a community of like-minded ... creatures. (p. 292)

He connects homesteading with a sense of ethical that hearkens to the word's root, *ethos*, which means "the fundamental character or values of a people, culture, or movement" (*American Heritage Dictionary*, 2000).

For Gadamer (1960/2003), as for Casey, ethical knowing ties understanding of universal principals to particular situations, and provides a way for people to choose ethical actions:

An active being ... is concerned with what is not always the same but can also be different. In it he can discover the point at which he has to act. The purpose of his knowledge is to govern his *action*.... Here lies the problem of moral knowledge.... Does man learn to make himself in the same way that a craftsman learns to make things according to his plan and will? (pp. 314-315)

Gadamer's reflections resonate with Emma's sense that she is drawn by Karma to make a life as a Montessori teacher. But Gadamer brings in a new dimension to this notion of

making a life when he asks, “Does man learn to make himself in the same way that a craftsman learns to make things according to his plan and will?” This question illuminates a tension teachers experience in their Montessori training. They are drawn to a way of teaching that draws out inner resources in children, yet in training they find themselves immersed in lessons that are quite technical. They learn a certain way to present lessons, and a very exact way to manipulate the materials of instruction. As he unfolds his thinking about hermeneutic consciousness, Gadamer (1960/2003) expresses a connection between technical knowing (*techne*) and moral knowing, that sheds some light on this tension:

There is a curious tension between *techne* that can be taught and one acquired through experience.... Experience is always automatically acquired in using this knowledge. For, as knowledge, it is always related to practical application.... In moral knowledge, too, it is clear that experience can never be sufficient for making right moral decisions.... There is, no doubt, a real analogy between the fully developed moral consciousness and the capacity to make something ... but they are certainly not the same. (pp. 315-316)

Gadamer (1960/2003) traces distinctions between technical knowing and ethical, or moral knowing to the changeability of natural laws. Just as Casey sees ethical knowing being tied to the realities of inhabiting a particular environment, Gadamer ties moral knowledge to particular situations:

Knowledge of the particular situation (which is nevertheless not a perceptual seeing) is a necessary supplement to moral knowledge. For although it is necessary to see what a situation is asking of us, this seeing does not mean that we perceive in the situation what is visible as such, but that we learn to see it as the situation of action and hence in the light of what is right. (p. 322)

Casey (1993) echoes Gadamer’s ideas as he reflects upon what happens to homesteaders when they come to settle into the particularities of their new homes and make adjustments to the home’s physical and cultural aspects:

To enter and reenter a habitat in homesteading, ... the proper habitus is also called for: the right set of skills for inhabiting or re-inhabiting that ending-place; ... being able to conceive of places in certain ways, to articulate thoughts about them, and to express such thought to others. (pp. 292-293)

In their stories of coming to Montessori, Margaret, Andrew, Emma, Ruth and Anne voice something of their understandings of the *ethos* of Montessorians. When they pause on the various bridges that beckon them to set out on journeys-of-becoming, they recognize in the landscape before them a community of like-minded people, people who value a watching, waiting, humbling way-of-life. They want to be part of this way-of-life that is something in the heart, and that offers children help in understanding their place in the cosmos. They are called to journey into this landscape of happy children and beautiful materials, to become Montessori teachers. They embark on a journey-of-becoming in order to learn “the appropriate habitus, the right set of local practices, the special skills that make not just bare inhabitation but co-habitancy possible” (Casey, 1993, p. 295). What is it like for them learn the technical skills needed to travel side-by-side with children in their journeys-of-becoming in Montessori classrooms? What meaning do they take from this tension between *techne* and *ethos*?

A Call to a New Way of Being

Each teacher tells the next part of the journey-to-Montessori story in terms of taking, doing, or being put-through Montessori training. Margaret, who started out as a traditional teacher, likens the experience of becoming a Montessorian to learning a second language:

You’re in this murky water where you’re trying to swim and get to the other side, and suddenly you have this burst – after practicing and learning the language, you suddenly are starting to dream in the second language.... And you’ve gotten to the other side.

In Montessori training, teachers learn the language and spirit of their chosen way-of-life. The language they learn becomes the medium through which they express their understandings of what it means to be a Montessori teacher. It is the same language other teachers speak, and yet it is not the same. As I talk with them about their training experiences, familiar words take on new shades of meaning. Cossentino (2006) finds that Montessorians' use of language, which she traces back to Montessori's writings, is deliberate and purposeful:

Cued by Montessori's deliberate creation of a unique lexicon, Montessorians routinely ... use the rhetoric of the movement to frame both their intentions and their actions. They command the tropes that constitute their worldview. And they employ those tropes in the construction of cognitive schemata, cultural identity, and moral outlook. (p. 88)

In Chapter Six I explore ways the language of Montessorians both separates these six public school Montessori teachers from their more traditionally oriented colleagues, and protects their teaching practices. Here, Margaret's words reveal the transformational experience of taking training. Learning the language, becoming well-versed, draws the teachers across somewhat murky waters into living with a second language and a new way-of-being. As they learn the language, they arrive at the other side. They become Montessorians.

Gadamer (1960/2003) explores language as a medium through which people who have different orientations come to understanding:

In situations where coming to an understanding is disrupted or impeded, we first become conscious of the conditions of all understanding.... Where there is understanding, there is not translation, but speech.... When we really master a language, no translation is necessary.... For you understand a language by living in it.... Mastering the language is a necessary precondition for coming to an understanding. (pp. 384-385)

As they enter training, the teachers are drawn-in to a way-of-life; they learn the language, and they adapt to the culture; they become Montessori teachers. What is “being trained” like for them? What does learning the language give them access to? What meanings do they take from this journey across the murky water to a new way-of-being?

Taking Training: Drawn-In to a Way-of-Life

The scientist is at the height of his achievement when the spirit has triumphed over the mechanism.... It is my belief that the thing which we should cultivate in our teachers is more the *spirit* than the mechanical skill of the scientist.... The interest in humanity to which we wish to educate the teacher must be characterized by the intimate relationship between the observer and the individual to be observed. (Montessori, 1912/1964, pp. 9-12)

All six teachers tell of taking training as the final stage of a journey that leads them to become Montessori teachers. In training, they listen to philosophy lectures, study the stages of child development, read Montessori’s books, and develop quote files. They practice presenting lessons with the beautiful materials. They create curriculum albums that hold detailed descriptions of lessons, lists of prerequisite lessons, direct and indirect aims, and personal reflections on the understandings they glean from their studies. They sit for hours observing Montessori classrooms. They spend a year in supervised teaching and they take oral and written exams. But all these experiences are only outward manifestations of an inward transformation. Through the experiences, teachers are drawn-in to a different way of being-with children. They learn to journey along side children; they learn to question what they perceive on the pathways of that journey. Images of managing and delivering instruction are supplanted by images of nurturing, responsive awareness. As Palmer (1993) suggests must happen, their hearts are transformed:

Reality is not merely “out there,” apart from us.... Reality is “in here” as well.... We and the rest of the world conspire to create the conditions in

which we live. So the transformation of teaching must begin in the transformed heart of the teacher. (p. 107)

In training, a change begins in the ways the teachers interact with children. They learn the technical aspects of “doing” Montessori teaching, but more importantly they learn a language and an attitude that suggest a different way of “being-with.” In the tension between *techne* and *ethos*, they learn to live their teaching lives attentively. They learn to be-with children in ways that allow them to watch receptively for glimpses of the hidden inner worlds of children’s becoming. Packard (2004) finds that when students and teachers experience a pedagogy of being-with, an unconcealing of inner worlds is sometimes possible:

A pedagogy of ‘being-with’ ... requires just this – being together in the giving and receiving.... Trust allows for the opening up and risking vulnerability. “In this being entrusted” the unconcealing is possible. A pedagogy of ‘being-with’ emerges around the grounding of being entrusted to one another – not around a traditional curriculum blueprint. Coming together in such pedagogy is to experience the intimacy that offers us closeness separated only by that which allows our differentness. (pp. 247-248)

The transformational journey through training provides an entrance into a new way of doing teaching, but also into a new way of being-with in teaching and learning relationships.

Rambusch (1962/2007) repeats Montessori’s theme of transformation of the adult:

Many are the adults who believe that the role of the child is to respect the adult and not the reverse. Maria Montessori believed that any effective education of the child must necessarily involve a modification of the adult.... It is the transformation of the adult that is the underlying theme of the Montessori Teacher Training Program. (p. 82)

Montessori, Rambusch, and the teachers themselves all use the word “training” when describing the experiences that transform them into Montessori teachers. They do not speak of attending a teacher education center or completing a teacher preparation course.

They do not feel they have been educated to become teachers, in the sense of having innate abilities drawn out; nor do they feel they have been merely prepared, in the sense of acquiring the necessary skills and competencies to teach. They are trained, drawn-in, transformed.

Davis (2004) associates the word training with a metaphysical orientation to education that focuses on transcendent questions about wisdom and meaning. He finds that the word implies the transmission of a body of revealed knowledge of unchanging laws and principles, through teaching practices that draw students in. The sense of training as drawing-in is reflected in the word's root word, Old French *traîner* meaning to drag, or draw (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 2003). Montessori teacher training is intended to drag or draw teachers out of a way of thinking in which adults control and manage children and demand their respect. It is intended to transform adults into people capable of putting aside cultural norms and expectations, in order to understand the child, not as “*something empty* that is to be filled through their own efforts, as *something inert and helpless* for which they must do everything, as *something lacking an inner guide* and in constant need of direction” (Montessori, 1936/1992, p. 16). Montessori saw in ordinary adult interactions with children a profound egocentrism:

They look upon everything pertaining to a child's soul from their own point of view.... Any deviation on the child's part from adult ways is regarded as an evil which the adult hastens to correct. An adult who acts in this way, even though he may be convinced that he is filled with zeal, love, and a spirit of sacrifice on behalf of his child, unconsciously suppresses the development of *the child's own personality*. (1936/1992, p. 16)

Montessori teacher training is intended to transmit a way of understanding childhood that does not distance teacher from student: “The interest in humanity to which we wish to educate the teacher must be characterized by the intimate relationship

between the observer and the individual to be observed” (Montessori, 1912/1964, p. 12).

The training is intended to change teachers, to draw them into generous and open-hearted ways of being-with children, “a different point of departure:”

Adults have not understood children or adolescents.... They must find a different point of departure. The adult must find within himself the still unknown error that prevents him from *seeing the child* as he is. If such a preparation is not made, if the attitudes relative to such preparation are not acquired, he cannot go further. (Montessori, 1936/1992, p. 16)

What does it mean to teachers to be drawn-in to the Montessori idea of seeing children as they are? The words of each of my conversants suggest that they gained from their training a powerful and beautiful sense of Montessori becoming part of them, a way of life, something “in the heart.”

Drawn-In by the Beauty of Heart Work

Andrew expresses a feeling that in training, Montessori enters the teacher’s heart and resonates with something already there, and he believes it enters the heart in training:

My consultant ... once said, “Montessori is in the heart.” And I do believe that.... And I think that is the key. Because I even think that with the materials, you can have a non-Montessori environment. Which does bring up the interesting dynamic of how does that get transmitted in a Montessori community? Which, I guess, is the job of training centers.

Ruth and Anne tell of being deeply moved by training. Ruth says, “While I was taking my training I totally fell in love with the Montessori philosophy.” Anne loved learning to be a Montessori primary teacher: “I went ... for the training ... and just loved it the whole time I was there.... It was just a very dynamic time for me.” Later, when she wanted to move into the elementary level, she took training again: “I took the training ... and it was great. It was absolutely fabulous. The ... training is astounding. It’s really wonderful – it’s really beautiful.”

Andrew's "something in the heart," Ruth's "coming home," and Anne's perception of beauty and wonder in the training speak to an experience that is more than learning how to give lessons, observe, and keep track of student progress. They resound with deeply felt meaning. Gadamer (1986) says a touching of the heart, an apprehension of beauty, call forth a sense of connectedness with something eternal:

The essence of the beautiful does not lie in some realm simply opposed to reality. On the contrary, we learn that however unexpected our encounter with beauty may be, it gives us an assurance that the truth ... can be encountered in the disorder of reality.... The ontological function of the beautiful is to bridge the chasm between the ideal and the real. (p. 15)

For Andrew, Ruth and Anne, becoming a Montessori teacher is something touching and beautiful. The training serves as a bridge that spans a chasm between their adult selves and the worlds of childhood. Its beauty touches and refocuses their spirits. Emma, too, expresses deep appreciation of ideas she encountered in training. She says she is attracted to Montessori's powerful and spiritual ideas about childhood:

The idea of this innate ability to learn that human beings have, and the way that Montessori looked at human beings universally, this is how human beings live ... really mirrored the studies of Buddhism. This is how the human mind works. I thought it was just really powerful.

Emma's attraction to the power of Montessori's ideas echo Gadamer's (1986) reflections on the power of beauty, which he says lies in an apprehension of spiritual truths perceived in particular experiences. He says that when we experience the spirituality of beauty, we enter an open field in which past and future touch the present: "The essence of what is called spirit lies in the ability to move within the horizon of an open future and an unrepeatable past" (p. 10). Emma hears a Karmic call to journey through life as a Montessori teacher over tea as she listens to a Montessori teacher's stories about her classroom life. In training she is attracted to Montessori's vision of the

universal in human experiences, which mirrors her spiritual quest as she studies Buddhism.

The teachers experience in training what Gadamer (1986) describes as the compelling, spiritual nature of beauty:

The sensible in all its particularity only enters the scene as a particular case of a universal... In the apparent particularity of sensuous experience, which we always attempt to relate to the universal, there is something in our experience of the beautiful that arrests us and compels us to dwell upon the individual appearance itself. (p. 16)

In training, the teachers enter the landscape they perceive before them at their moments of recognition, and find themselves in the midst of something that resonates with what they already hold in their hearts. In the experience of recognition they are transformed. Training is beautiful and powerful for them because it brings them into a new space, an open field where their spirits “move within the horizon of an open future and an unrepeatable past,” a space that resonates with what they have experienced in their lives before, but where they now experience teaching from a new perspective, “*seeing the child as he is*” (Montessori, 1936/1992, p. 16).

Drawn-In to a Stream of Intellectual Currents

There are two kinds of intelligence: one acquired, as a child in school memorizes facts and concepts from books and from what the teacher says, ...

There is another kind of tablet, one already completed and preserved inside you. A spring overflowing its springbox. A freshness in the center of the chest....

This second knowing is a fountainhead from within you, moving out. (Rumi, 1995, p. 178)

Each teacher expresses a sense that taking training provides a key to the Montessori way-of-life. The training brings the teachers into a deep personal inquiry into

the foundational Montessori ideal, “Follow the child;” in training they come to a space of questioning the meaning of this philosophy that arises from within, from the heart, from Rumi’s “freshness in the center of the chest.” Ruth says that training provides an understanding of “what the ideal is.” Emma expresses a belief that training is “critical in understanding the foundation of Montessori philosophy and method.” Anne talks about how the philosophy she learns in her training fosters her intellectual engagement with children’s growth and development, and makes her feel connected to Montessori and other Montessorians:

There’s just never an end to the amount of insights that you can get from the ... albums..... I really use those as my guiding influence.... Knowing what it says in the literature helps you as an adult be in your day, day after day after day.... It’s like you’re onto a thread, a stream of intellectual currents that just keeps you moving and just fosters you as an adult fostering children.

She sticks with her albums because they provide insight, and bring her into “a stream of intellectual currents.” Her image of a stream that keeps her moving and fosters her spirit resonates with Rumi’s “spring overflowing its springbox. A freshness in the center of the chest.”

Trixie’s story, too, conveys a sense that training was a momentous event that brought her more than “facts and concepts/ from books and from what the teacher says.” Training brings her to a new way of being. She speaks in a matter-of-fact manner about being put through training:

The Board asked if I would consider going through training, and so they put me through training. And that’s how I became a Montessori teacher.

In training, Trixie doesn’t just learn to teach a curriculum, or to use a method; she becomes something fundamentally new and different. Andrew’s story echoes Trixie’s sense of being moved into a new state of being. Newly hired by a Montessori charter

school, he tells of wheels being set in motion, wheels that move him into a new space where he finds himself doing training:

My wife said ... “There’s no way you’re signing up to a Montessori school with no Montessori training.” ... I made my decision to do it.... All the wheels were in motion, and there I was sitting in that ... room over there doing my Montessori training.

He finds himself sitting in a room doing training, propelled by wheels set in motion by a career choice and his wife’s passion for Montessori. Like Trixie, he is propelled by circumstances. Yet through doing Montessori training, they both become something new; they become Montessori teachers.

Andrew contrasts his choice to take training with the choices made by other teachers in his charter school. When the school first opened, several of the teachers had not taken training. As he tells of their struggles, he explains that “they were not well-versed.” Versed, like converse, versatility, and diversion, arises from an Indo-European root: *wert*, meaning to turn or wind (*American Heritage Dictionary*, 2000). These words evoke poetic images of reflective journeys. He says the other teachers in the charter school had the curriculum albums, but had not been through the transformational journey of taking Montessori training:

They were not trained, well they were trained by that mail-order training, have you ever seen that? You can get the albums. So they were not well-versed. They were struggling. They were traditional teachers and very liberal thinking, creative hands-on, but did not have that Montessori training.

Andrew concludes that the mail-order training is not enough because it does not bring the teachers through the reflective journey of training to a place where they are well-versed in the Montessori way of seeing children. Following the child, listening, watching, and honoring the child, are key aspects of the new space teachers enter when they become

Montessori teachers. As Andrew says, without the transformation-through-training that allows teachers to see the child from the heart, there can be no Montessori: “I even think that with the materials, you can have a non-Montessori environment.”

The teachers all value the foundations of Montessori philosophy, the words and voices from training that help them stay true to their understandings of Montessori. What meaning do they carry from these words and voices into their classrooms? What does it mean to them to be “well-versed?” When Margaret tells of trying to stay true to her training, she speaks with passionate intensity:

I’ve been really trying to stay. There are just so many voices here in public school that I’m so glad I started out in a more pure Montessori environment.

What she has taken from her training is not simply “facts and concepts from books and from what the teacher says,” although she has learned from books and from what the teachers said. By starting out in “a more pure Montessori environment,” she feels she gained access to something important that helps her stay true to ideals that arise from Rumi’s second knowing, a fountainhead within that seeks harmony between adult and child.

Margaret, Trixie, and Anne all talk about trying to stay true to their training, recorded in their curriculum albums. In these albums they keep a record of what they learned in training. Montessori elementary teachers create albums in their training that include lessons for Language Arts, Math and Geometry, Physical, Earth and Life Sciences, Geography, History, Practical Life, Art, Music, and Physical Education. The albums include descriptions of lessons, lists of materials, citations to prerequisite lessons, and direct and indirect aims of lessons. This is the technical part of the Montessori

“method” also accessed by Andrew’s fellow charter school teachers who subscribed to the mail-order training.

But the albums do more than record a method. They record the teachers’ transformational encounters with a watching and waiting way of life that is a method only in the ordinary meaning of the word method. The roots of the word, Greek *meta-*, meaning between, with, beside, or after; and *hodos*, meaning way or journey (*American Heritage Dictionary*, 2000), suggest something of the relationship between the teacher’s training experiences and their lives as Montessori teachers. The Montessori method is far more than a litany of lessons. It is a way-of-being that arises from a journey, and places teachers between, with, and beside the children in their classrooms. Training gives the teachers access to more than a method of teaching skills and concepts. It gives them access to a language, a way of questioning, and a way of thinking about the meaning of teaching. Gadamer (1960/2003) tells us that true understanding is not achieved through method, but through questioning and inquiry:

The certainty achieved by using scientific methods does not suffice to guarantee truth.... Rather, what the tool of method does not achieve must – and really can – be achieved by a discipline of questioning and inquiring, a discipline that guarantees truth. (pp. 490-491)

The albums teachers create in training hold memories of embodied experiences in training, and personal reflections on the meanings of those experiences. Merleau-Ponty (1945/2002) uncovers a deep connection between bodily experiences and how we perceive the world:

Present perception generally speaking consists in drawing together, on the basis of one’s present position, the succession of previous positions, which envelop each other.... Each instant of the movement embraces its whole span, and particularly the first.... Our bodily experience of movement is not a particular case of knowledge; it provides us with a way of access to the world. (p. 162)

He says that each instant of bodily engagement with the world embraces a whole span of embodied experiences, but the first instance has particular power to provide access to the world. The world of Montessori teaching unfolds for the teachers as they first encounter shared, embodied experiences of Montessori teaching. Each elementary Montessori teacher-in-training has the experience of spending hours in a classroom listening to philosophy lectures, and sitting cross-legged on the floor presenting lessons on floor mats to fellow students. Each has picked up and explored the shining thousand cube and has laid out colorful beads on wooden trays to explore the concept of division. Each has unrolled the long, colorful Timeline of Life and traced the red lines of evolution and extinction of species. Each has acted out prepositions and verbs and adjectives using chairs and balls and colored pencils. Without this physical engagement with the materials, the training is only cerebral. It does not touch the heart. Casey (1993) calls such embodied memories “habit memories:”

In residing we rely on the body’s capacity for forming “habit memories;” that is to say, memories formed by slow sedimentation and realized by the reenactment of bodily motions.... In inhabitation, the body is an engine of exploration and creation as well as an agent of habit. Thanks precisely to the familiarity established by habitual body memories, we get our bearing in a place of residence, the interior analogue of orientation in open landscape. (pp. 117)

The shared embodied “habit memories” of Montessori training are a part of being drawn-in to a stream of intellectual currents. Each teacher expresses a sense of transformational meaning-making as they tell of the time spent becoming a Montessori teacher. Over time and with an accumulation of embodied experiences and reflection, they learn a new language, become well-versed, and find the patience and respect needed to enter into new ways of being-with children. O’Donohue (2004) suggests that moments of grace and beauty arise from a careful, attentive approach to meaning-making:

When our approach is respectful, sensitive and worthy, gifts of healing, challenge and creativity open to us.... A reverence of approach awakens depth and enables us to be truly present where we are. When we approach with reverence great things decide to approach us. The rushed heart and the arrogant mind lack the gentleness and patience to enter that embrace. (p. 24)

The Montessori teacher training provides the teachers time to approach a new way of being carefully and attentively. Becoming well-versed allows them to enter their classroom with hearts gently and patiently open. Andrew feels that mail-order training does not serve the other teachers well; it does not engage them deeply in the journey of becoming. Because they are not well-versed, they do not have access to the kind of knowing that arises from the well-spring named by Rumi, “a fountainhead from within you, moving out.” Andrew says that “Montessori trained teachers are key.” Training is the key that unlocks a door to teachers’ hearts. Opening this door, they step out into a new way-of-being, entering the “stream of intellectual currents” that flows between Montessorians, past, present and future.

Drawn-In to New Traditions

In learning to do school, students are in fact learning to enter into culturally significant traditions of knowing and doing.... The words that are used, what counts as knowing and doing, are shaped by what other individuals have said and done, by the conversations that have gone before. This is the irreducible nature of tradition, which constitutes the present matrix out of which we act. (Applebee, 1996, p. 36)

Applebee finds that students enter into the accepted traditions of schooling by learning “not only the roles of teacher and learner, but also what will count as knowing” (1996, p. 35). His thoughts shed light on the transformational experience of becoming a Montessori teacher. Montessori teachers-in-training choose to leave behind “traditions of knowing and doing” learned in their own childhoods, and they are drawn-in to a new stream of intellectual currents, the traditions of Montessorians. In these traditions,

teachers are guided by the foundational text: “Follow the Child.” As Montessori says, “The child himself ... the mysterious will that directs his formation – this must be our guide” (1946/1989, p. 16). In this stream of intellectual currents they learn new ways to use words, and new ways of thinking about what counts as knowing and doing.

Taking training transforms these teachers into Montessorians. They take up the key, unlock the door and begin their journeys into new landscapes and new horizons. What that means for their day-to-day life in the classroom is that their teaching is no longer guided by adult-created learning goals. They do not plan objectives for the entire class, lecture, assign readings and worksheets, assess progress with pencil-and-paper tests. In these new landscapes, they focus on the monumental, complex, self-creating work of children. They follow the child, which means preparing an environment in which children can find meaningful, deeply engaging work. They guide. They make decisions, minute-by-minute, day-by-day about when to step in to introduce new work, and when to step back while children make choices about what they will learn.

All six teachers, whether they took, got, went to, were put through or did training, are now Montessori teachers, and they enter into new traditions where they are called upon daily to reach within and find “faith that *the child will reveal himself* through work” (Montessori, 1949/1995, p. 276). They find faith and hope in the intellectual currents they revisit in their albums. The foundational text of Montessori training, “Follow the Child” gives them, as Anne says, “humility, patience, insight and creativity.” Our conversations about their teaching experiences travel frequently through territories the teachers name using Montessori language. It is the same language traditional teachers use, but words such as work and discipline have new meanings for them now. How do Montessori

traditions shape the day-to-day classroom lives of the teachers? What meanings do they find in Montessori notions such as good work, inner discipline, and following the child? I turn now to an exploration of our conversations about what their classrooms are like when the ideas they learned in training come to life in their Montessori classrooms.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE GOODNESS OF WORK

Discipline is ... attained indirectly, that is, by developing activity in spontaneous work ... for no other purpose than that of keeping alive that inner flame on which life depends.... This is the kind of work that gives order to a person's life and opens up to it infinite possibilities of growth. (Montessori, 1948/1967, p. 305)

Gadamer asks, "Does man learn to make himself in the same way that a craftsman learns to make things according to his plan and will?" (1960/2003, pp. 314-315).

Montessori says that people do "make" themselves in childhood, through the kind of spontaneous work that "gives order to a person's life" and opens up "infinite possibilities of growth." In a sense, Montessori teachers-in-training re-make themselves through their work, too: they create curriculum albums, practice with the beautiful materials, read and converse about educational philosophy, observe classrooms, and write reflectively about their unfolding understandings. Training is a transformational pilgrimage of self-recreation, one that carries teachers away from traditional ways-of-being in school learned in their own childhoods. On the pathways of training, they learn the traditions of Montessori teaching and they make these traditions their own. Re-created, they step onto new pathways, guided by the foundational Montessori text: "Follow the Child." On these pathways, "goodness" is characterized by independence, order and growth.

This chapter explores Montessori teachers' understandings of the goodness of work. After training, they settle into Montessori classrooms, but in many ways their pilgrimages continue. Everyday in their work with children they walk on pathways entered during training; and everyday they guide their students' journeys-of-becoming as they help them find work that engages their interest and attention, gives order, and opens possibilities of growth.

The Grace of Work

When Trixie accepted her first job in a public Montessori school, she took over an unsettled class in the middle of a school year. The teacher she replaced had given up; he was no longer even trying to provide guidance or work for the children. They were allowed to do whatever they wanted, and they were unfocused, rowdy, and unresponsive to adult intervention. As she talks about this class, Trixie expresses deep respect for work, which she calls a “normalizing factor:”

I believed that work was a great normalizing factor and indeed it was. Because that classroom was a mess when I took it over and people within a few months were standing outside the door going, “I don’t believe what I’m seeing here.” It was very difficult. All those beautiful materials, brand new materials thrown on shelves ... and scattered, and everything brand new but never used for any purpose.... And those kids did respond to work. That was the saving grace.

“Taking over” a classroom does not sound like the humble waiting and watching the teachers name when they talk about their Montessori way-of-life. It sounds like a teacher asserting control over children. Yet, Trixie names her taking over a saving grace. She puts the scattered materials to good purpose. The materials provide work for the children, and their response to work is a saving grace. With work, the children come back to what Trixie considers “normal” for children.

Trixie’s use of the words “work” and “normal” are instances where the language Montessorians use seems to be the same language more traditional teachers speak, and yet it is not the same. “Work” is a familiar word in schools, but in Trixie’s story it takes on new shades of meaning. It does not connote obedient completion of assignments or time on task. And “normal” here does not mean typical, ordinary, or statistically in the middle. Trixie associates the words with grace. Grace, as she uses it, calls forth an image

of redemption. Work normalizes: it provides something redeeming to the children, something that aids their natural and normal development.

Grudin (1990) identifies a passion for work as, “The delight of being totally within one’s own element – of identifying fully with one’s work and seeing it as an expression of one’s own character” (p. 12). He says:

Attention to one’s subject should be so generous, extended, and intimate that the idea virtually inhabits the mind.... For each subject, expanded by concentration until it occupies the full volume of the mind, becomes a kind of world in itself, crowded with the forms and potentialities that tie it to the rest of experience. (p. 13)

Grudin’s words resonate with Trixie’s invocation of grace. As the children find work, that work inhabits their minds, filling them with “forms and potentialities.” Work provides a world in which they can create themselves. Grace, from the Latin *gratia* refers to a pleasing quality, goodwill, and gratitude (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 2003). The children’s work has a pleasing quality; it evokes gratitude in Trixie, and in people who stand watching in the doorway, concerned for the well-being of the children. The children find themselves in their work. Grudin (1990) says that the agenda of true teachers is “the art of self-understanding” (p. 150):

The role of the true teacher must be one of reminding as well as inculcating. The teacher acts as mediator between the order that is implicit in the cosmos and the order that is implicit in the individual. Because of this relationship, knowledge of anything is also knowledge of oneself. (p. 150)

The goodness of work brings grace to the children in Trixie’s classroom. Through it, Trixie appeals to something within the children that calls them to a kind of order and discipline that arises from within, from “the order that is implicit in the individual.” In the stories of each teacher, I hear echoes of Trixie’s naming of work as a “saving grace.”

Work as a Bridge Between the Activities of Teacher and Child

Development ... is like an arrow released from the bow, which flies straight, swift and sure. The child's conquest of independence begins with his first introduction to life.... A vital force is active within him and this guides his efforts towards their goal. It is the force called, "*horme.*" (Montessori, 1949/1995, p. 83)

Montessori's descriptions of pedagogical good focus on children's spontaneous, purposeful activity. She links this kind of activity to the psychological concept of vital energy that forms the personality, *horme*, from the Greek word *hormé*, meaning impulse (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 2003). Work, in the language of Montessori teachers, is activity that nourishes a child's impulse to develop a healthy and independent personality. Montessorians consider self-selected, purposeful work to be the normal activity of childhood.

Their particular use of the word work, as Cossentino (2006) discovers, is a central construct in the pedagogy of Montessorians:

Montessori elaborated a theory of "good work" (Gardner, Csikszentmihalyi, & Damon, 2001) that separated work from the workplace.... Central to that theory was the notion that development is both natural and effortful. Development, she claimed, is "the child's work."... Work also serves as the bridge between development and pedagogy, with pedagogy providing the proper design of an environment within which to work as well as the protection of the child's concentration once work is underway. (pp. 64-66)

Cossentino likens work to a bridge connecting children's developmental activity with a teacher's pedagogical activity. A bridge, as Aoki (2005a) tells us, can call to travelers to linger and attend in new ways to their journeys. Montessori teachers create an environment suited to the developmental impulses of children, and in this prepared environment they help children find work that will call them to linger with concentrated attentiveness. Then the teachers step aside and protect concentration, not so the children

will be prepared for the workplace, but in order to help the children attend to their work of self-creation.

Trixie finds meaning in work because it helps children find the way on their normal developmental pathways. This meaning of work is quite different from the dominant notion in schools that students are workers-in-training for adult jobs.

Csikszentmihalyi and Schneider (2000) trace the meaning of work in our culture, and find that our conceptions of work have changed dramatically over the years. They note that thousands of years ago, early farming technologies introduced work as a part of life separate from other activities in two ways. For one group of people, new farming technologies introduced forced labor, and created work alienation. Abundant harvests created by the new technologies also opened up possibilities for division of labor, though, and for other groups of people, their jobs began to define who they were.

Csikszentmihalyi and Schneider (2000) find that work alienation and a vision of jobs as a source of fulfillment of individual potential still exist in our culture in a state of unresolved tension:

As our attitudes toward work become increasingly reflective, and personal freedom and satisfaction in work become more essential, our increased awareness has resulted in an ever-harsher duality. On the one hand, work that is freely chosen and that allows personal growth and expression is valued more than ever; on the other, work that is obligatory and alienating is felt to be a burden. (p. 10)

Montessori's use of work as a pedagogical construct connects children's work to the idea of "freedom and satisfaction in work." She does not connect classroom work with job preparation, but she does link it to personal growth, and as Cossentino (2006) says, to a vision of goodness that extends to society as a whole:

The progressive effects of joyful work, freely chosen, are meant to lead to a particular vision of "goodness." And that vision not only links virtue to

concentration, discipline, and order but also links human development to social progress. (p. 69)

The saving grace of work Trixie names in her story arises from concentration and engagement with work that transforms the personalities of her students. Work is linked to personal growth. Spontaneous concentration unleashes an inner, vital energy that sets the children onto pathways of positive self-creation, and concentrated attention on work arises from an inner impulse toward healthy development. Just as Aoki's bridge draws his attention both to the place and moment he is in and the landscape beyond, children's work pulls their attention into the moment, and their concentrated efforts draw them onto pathways of healthy development. Work provides a bridge between teachers' visions of goodness and children's inner impulses to develop healthy personalities.

Work that Calls to the Soul

Emma, like Trixie, took over a chaotic public school Montessori classroom. She found herself in the midst of a group of "great kids! They just had terrible habits." Her story further develops the theme of the grace of good work, and illuminates the complexity of creating a classroom where children will choose transformational work:

The teacher who had them the year before was way overwhelmed and under-prepared.... At one point, ... she left the room crying and they had to call on the PA system, "Our teacher's out in the hall crying again." ... The children were awful, I know they were awful, and she couldn't take it.... Because Montessori children will be as bad as you let them be.

Like Trixie's story, Emma's story begins with a group of children who have left the pathways of healthy self-construction, and fallen into a chaos of "terrible habits." Her story sounds very much like one Montessori (1949/1995) tells:

The teacher may find herself in an agonizing situation if she is armed with no other weapon than the basic idea of offering children the means of development and of letting them express themselves freely. The little hell that has begun to break loose in these children will drag to itself

everything within reach, and the teacher, if she remains passive, will be overwhelmed by confusion. (p. 268)

Emma's story and Montessori's admonition paint painful images: a teacher in tears (again!), a little hell breaking loose and dragging to itself everything within reach, a teacher overwhelmed by confusion. Montessori says it is not enough to offer children the means of expression, and it is not enough to let them express themselves freely. As Emma continues her story, we see her, like Trixie, reaching out to her students by calling them to work; she invokes an idea of awakening children that resonates with Trixie's "saving grace:"

I want to wake them up. "Wake up! Come on! What you do matters, what you think matters, what you say matters, what you write matters!" As opposed to the dominant – in our culture, we all go from TV, to video games. Nobody has to work. Nobody has to become engaged.... We're here! Let's do something. Let's do something real! Let's do something meaningful!

Emma is not focusing her pedagogic concern on whether the students learn quantifiable bits of information. She is concerned because TV, video games and the dominant attitude toward work block her students' engagement with work. She wants them to do something meaningful, something real, something that will spark the inner flames and open up possibilities for growth. Applebee (1996) explores the tension Emma names:

The classroom represents an intersection of many systems of discourse competing for the students' attention. These include the expectations of the home, the public culture of the community and nation, the pressures of peer cultures, and the desire for individual attention.... The teacher's ability to mediate among these traditions ... will have a substantial impact on the learning that occurs. For the most part, this mediation occurs tacitly, ... as part of the background of expectations that are created within the classroom. (p. 101)

Applebee finds that the way teachers talk with students has a powerful shaping effect on the curriculum that emerges in classrooms. For both Emma and Trixie, Montessori's

conception of work implicitly shapes their understandings of what should happen in the classroom, and as they invoke the notion of work, they mediate the influence of competing discourses and create a background of expectations.

The teacher's job in Emma's story is to awaken the children and set them onto the pathways illuminated by spontaneous attention to work. Montessori (1949/1995) says the teacher must call to the children's souls:

She must call to them, wake them up, by her voice and thought. A vigorous and firm call is the only true act of kindness... Just as we must call a child's name before he can answer, so we must call the soul vigorously if we wish to awaken it. (p. 268)

Emma wants to wake up her students, and Montessori tells teachers to wake children up by calling to their souls. What does it mean to a teacher to feel she is waking her students up or calling to their souls? What meaning of the word call is evoked when Montessori says, "We must call the soul vigorously if we wish to awaken it"?

In the phrase "vigorous and firm call," Montessori again uses familiar words, but uses them in a way that brings out different meanings. Any teacher might call a child's name to get her attention. A familiar image of raised hands signaling readiness to answer a question also springs to mind. But Montessori says a vigorous and firm call is a true act of kindness that wakens a child's soul. Her use of the word call sounds quite different from calling on a child to answer a question or get her attention. What, then, does she mean when she advise teachers to call to a child's soul?

Huebner (1999b) names a call to children's souls as an act of attending to and caring for children's journeys. He believes that educators need to place the soul's journey at the center of teaching:

The question that educators need to ask is not how people learn and develop, but what gets in the way of the great journey – the journey of

the self or soul. Education is a way of attending to and caring for that journey. (p. 405)

He says that attending to the soul's journey, calling to the soul, is the work of love.

Bolman and Deal (2001) say that soul is "grounded in the depths of personal experiences," and can be found in "the depths at the core of our being" (p. 9). Huebner believes the teacher's work of love is a call to the soul, to the depths of a child's personal experiences and being, and he says this call arises from the teacher's response to "the call of the student:"

That part of the teaching life that is a response to the call of the student results in the work of love.... The teacher listens to the students, and speaks with great care, that the gift of language, jointly shared, may reassure and disclose a world filled with truth and beauty, joy and suffering, mystery and grace.... The journey of the student is filled with hope, rather than despair; more life rather than less. (Huebner, 1999b, pp. 411-412)

Lantieri (2001), exploring the place of spirituality in schools, finds that the spiritual dimension "helps us place our actions in a wider, richer context ... nurturing a broader, deeper vision that takes us beyond ourselves and gives us and our actions a sense of worth in the context of community" (p. xv):

It is in the spiritual dimension of our lives that Humans have the capacity for creativity, for love, for meaning and purpose, for wisdom, beauty, and justice.... Spiritual experience can be described as the conscious recognition of a connection that goes beyond our own minds or emotions. (pp. 7-8)

Montessori says a call to the soul is an act of kindness. Like Huebner, she associates call with kindness, and with an awakening of the soul. She says it is a teacher's caring call to children's souls that makes it possible for the children to respond to that inner will that sets them on the path of healthy development, and that "under proper

conditions” children’s inner will to develop their powers will find an external match in the form of meaningful activity:

Under proper conditions, the will is a force which impels activities beneficial to life. Nature imposes on the child the task of growing up, and his will leads him to make progress and to develop his power. A will in agreement with what the individual is doing finds the path open for its conscious development. (Montessori, 1949/1995, p. 253)

Montessori speaks of pedagogy as a bridge that connects the will of children with their activities. She calls on teachers to create conditions that allow children’s growing up (their being), to unfold naturally and in harmony with their activities (their doing).

Van Manen (1986) finds that too often a language of *doing* is pervasive in pedagogical relations:

The industrial model has deeply invaded schooling...It is almost exclusively a language of *doing* for the future, not of *being* now.... The language of objectives, aims, teacher expectation, intended learning outcomes, goals, ends in view is a disembodied language of hope from which hope itself has been systematically purged. (p. 28)

Van Manen characterizes the industrial model of schools, one that uses the language of objectives, aims, teacher expectations, outcomes and goals, as *doing* for the future. He wishes for a more hopeful pedagogy, one that allows the *being* of children to be held as central.

Emma and Trixie, as they bring their notion of the saving grace of work to the children in their troubled classes, create an atmosphere of expectations in the classes. They frame their interactions with the children in terms of guiding children to work. What the children do matters, but what they say and think also matters. Trixie and Emma, as they speak of children’s work, hold *being* and *doing* in creative tension. As they guide students to do work, they wish to lead the children to an awareness of their being in the world.

Aoki (2005d) says that understanding teaching requires awareness that goes deeper than examining what teachers do with children or what they cause children to do. He believes that understanding teaching requires attunement to a teacher's presence with children's being. As he questions the meaning of teaching, he finds that this questioning draws him into thinking about teaching as "the place where care dwells," a place of "ingathering and belonging:"

What *is* teaching?... This new question ... draws me to a deeper level, a level that allows the essence of teaching to speak to me.... The question understood in this way urges me to be attuned to a teacher's presence with children. This presence, if authentic, is being. I find that teaching so understood is attuned to the place where care dwells, a place of ingathering and belonging, where the indwelling of teachers and students is made possible by the presence of care that each has for the other. (p. 191)

Emma says she wants to awaken her upper elementary students. She calls to their souls as she responds to them with love. She calls them to work because she cares for them, and wants them to realize, "What you do matters, what you think matters.... We're here! Let's do something! Let's do something real! Let's do something meaningful!" Emma calls her students to search for meaning and mattering, and she opposes what she sees as a dominant attitude in the culture around her: "In our culture, we all go from TV, to video games. Nobody has to work. Nobody has to become engaged." Doing something real and meaningful means becoming engaged with the world.

Work that Matters

Emma calls to her students to wake up and become engaged with what they are doing because she cares for them, and wants them to find meaning in their work. For Trixie, as for Emma, work is not just a way for children to gain information and acquire academic skills; it is also a way for them to discover who they are in the larger world:

To assist the child to become a person of the world, ... that's what it's all about. And a lot of that is not academic growth, it is becoming a responsible human being, becoming an aware human being, becoming an observant human being. I often tend to get caught up in ... the materials, you know, the academic activity, the love of learning.... We want to make our children lovers of learning, but tend to lose sight of the fact that they are constructing themselves.... Definitely for me, that's what it's all about.

As she names what Montessori teaching means to her, Trixie expresses a creative tension between academic growth and growth as an observant and aware human being. She feels herself getting caught up in academic activity as she presents the beautiful materials to the children, but she reminds herself to remain open to the real work of the children – “constructing themselves.”

Berman (1998), too, finds value in curricular experiences that encourage students to think and act in ways that open their hearts to possibilities of becoming. Her image of students who grow into “horizontal persons” resonates with Trixie’s student who becomes “a person of the world,” and Emma’s wide awake students, engaged in work that is real and meaningful, beyond what the culture of TV and video games expects of them:

Horizontal persons have not been completely shaped by the “mold of the age in which they live ...” (Hinson, 1995, p. 27). Such persons may see beyond what is to what might be – to see possibilities.... Horizontal persons wonder, ponder, act, and reflect. Horizontal persons see and hear what is around, but they can also use their work, their abilities and imaginations to create something that takes us beyond the here and now. (Berman, 1998, p. 176)

Trixie reminds herself that her students are constructing themselves to become responsible, aware, observant human beings, like Berman’s horizontal persons who use their work and their imaginations to create new possibilities. She wants them to become lovers of learning, but the learning she is looking for is not learning for the sake of mastering discrete bits of academic information. The children’s authentic work is self-construction, the work of becoming responsible, aware and observant human beings.

Cossentino (2006) finds that Montessori teachers' pedagogical language and actions foster a notion that it is "normal" for children to concentrate deeply, find joy in their work and create themselves as persons who contribute in positive ways to the well-being of others:

Work in a Montessori classroom is designed to call the child to deep concentration.... In the course of that activity the very young child takes on the monumental task of constructing her own personality. As development continues, that task grows more complex and the child's work encompasses not just personal development but the betterment of humanity. (p. 84)

Emma calls to her students to wake up and engage in work that matters. Her words echo those of Montessori, written in the early years of her work with children: "I felt ... that my voice which called to them, *awakened* the children" (Montessori, 1912/1964, p. 37).

Both Emma's wake-up call and Trixie's taking over are intended to reach their students' hearts, and spark that "inner flame on which life depends." Emma says that over time her students have come to expect more of themselves:

I think over the course of the year the students raised expectations for themselves and I think that's a really good thing. [They] started to do the work and do their best work because it was important to them.... And it isn't ... in the form of a grade.... It's more this sense of being responsible for what you throw out into the world.... They really arrived there and it was lovely.

She values their work both because she sees that it is important to them, and because they are accepting responsibility for what they "throw out into the world." Her message to her students is, "We work here. This is what we do here." Like Trixie, Emma speaks of work as a normal developmental activity for her students, the "normalizing factor." And she says, "When it's going well, I can really see little mini transformations taking place in these individuals right now."

Work that Connects

Connections are made slowly, sometimes they grow underground.
You cannot tell always by looking at what is happening.
More than half the tree is spread out in the soil under your feet....

Keep tangling and interweaving and taking more in,
a thicket and bramble wilderness to the outside but to us
interconnected with rabbit runs and burrows and lairs. (Piercy, 1994, p. 128)

Piercy offers a poetic image of understandings growing underground, like “rabbit runs and burrow and lairs.” She expresses the complexity of learning in her image of “a thicket and bramble wilderness to the outside,” and says that sometimes learning is invisible – “You cannot tell always by looking.” For Margaret things are going right in her lower elementary classroom when children are engaged with answering their own questions, “tangling and interweaving and taking more in:”

The essence of Montessori is giving the children the capacity to reveal themselves to us.... The kids come into elementary asking the big “why” questions. How do I fit into the world? What is this world? Where is it in relationship to others?... How does this volcano work in relationship to a rock cycle? Look at that! Now I know my planets! And I figured out that the sun is a star!

She sees children’s questions as beginnings of something that grows organically, making invisible underground connections. She listens for questions, and she watches for ways to help children make connections: “They want to seek out new ways of finding information, but also are starting to see connections to other things.” She says the essence of Montessori is the teacher helping children reveal themselves in their questioning and their exploratory connection-making. Van Manen (1986) thinks about children’s questions in a similar way:

Rather than seeing a child’s question as something that needs a quick and simple answer, the adult should try to help the child in his or her natural inclination to *live* the question.... Each of these questions is worth pausing for.... An effective parent or teacher ... can catch a question and deepen

it.... A tactful educator will keep alive the interest that produced the child's question. (pp. 40-41)

In van Manen's image of tactful pedagogical relations, we see the teacher catching questions and deepening them in order to keep interest alive. He explores the underground rabbit runs and burrows of learning:

Children and young people learn to live in the world and to interact with significant aspects of the world.... They learn to reflect on the world, and specifically on their experiences of the world.... Both the selection of subject matter content and the teacher's tactful approach to teaching this content almost always has consequences for growth and learning that may affect the child's character and ability to reflect and make critical sense of the world. (van Manen, 1991, p. 172)

Here van Manen shows us teachers not only catching the questions and keeping them alive through a tactful approach, but also planting seeds of interest in selection of subject matter.

Andrew uses the image of seed planting as he talks about his classroom life. He names the children's independent explorations as the essence of Montessori. He speaks of himself as the planter of seeds of interest as he prepares the environment. Then, as students become interested, he steps back and does what he can to keep the interest alive. He indirectly references Montessori's notion of *horme*, as he describes his focus on children's healthy exploration of their inner desires and inner strengths:

Creating an environment that's psychologically healthy for children to explore their inner desires and their inner strengths.... It's already existent within the child; it just needs to be sprouted from the child's interest.... There are times when kids are exploring things that I just think, "Wow, that's it. That's Montessori right there."

Andrew uses a metaphor of sprouting: he pictures children's inner desires and strengths being like young seedlings, sprouting from the fertile soil of interest. The image of

sprouts, green, energetically reaching toward the sun, full of new life, paints a vivid picture of natural energy growing powerfully out of the seeds of interest.

Aoki (2005i), like Andrew, believes interest should be a focus of curriculum:

We might begin to be more alert to where we are when we say “a child is interested” or “a teacher is interested.” Life in the classroom is ... lived in the spaces between and among... “Interest” comes from “*inter/esse*” (*esse* – to be), being in the “inter.” So “to be interested” is to be in the intertextual spaces of inter-faces, ... a place of difference, where something different can happen or be created, where whatever is created comes through as a voice that grows in the middle. (p. 282)

Aoki’s intertextual space of inter-faces is a place where students and teacher live between and among the creative energies each brings to the classroom. In this space of inter-faces, students and teachers journey together, between and amongst the many different energies that connect them to each other and to the world.

Like Emma, calling to her class, “Let’s do something real! Let’s do something meaningful!”, Andrew calls upon the power of interest to help his students tap into their inner energies in order to achieve a vision of something larger than themselves. He celebrates the power of interest to provide energy for action, energy that transforms and enlarges his students’ world views:

One of the moments is when my students after a disaster like the Tsunami or Hurricane Katrina, when they, on their own without some sort of school program to collect for those things, gathered what they needed to help, met with the principal, gathered money, had a focus for it, and all this real independent, all on their own. Just watching that unfold. One of my student’s mother came to me and said that they knew Montessori was right for their child because he wanted an iPod, but he donated his money to this cause. And that was the moment. That tie in, that cosmic task of seeing something larger than themselves.

Andrew rejoices as he watches his students, like Berman’s (1998) horizontal persons, see possibilities and use “their work, their abilities and imaginations to create something that takes us beyond the here and now” (p. 176). He celebrates “that tie in, that cosmic task of

seeing something larger than themselves.” He celebrates the connections they make to “something larger than themselves.”

For Emma, Margaret, Trixie and Andrew a good day is the day children are so interested in their work they enter spaces of connections and growth, “spaces of interfaces, the places where ... something different can happen or be created” (Aoki, 2005i, p. 282). Aoki believes that curriculum workers should think of schools in terms of creating such spaces for becoming. He says that when schools focus solely on intellectual or practical skills they risk fragmenting students into bodies split from minds. He proposes a school “given primarily to being and becoming, a school that emphasizes and nurtures the becoming of human beings.” Such a school, he says, does not neglect “doing” but focuses on the togetherness of “doing” and “being” enfolded in “becoming” (2005c, p. 361).

Aoki’s ideal resonates with Margaret’s celebration of children connecting to the world, Trixie’s appreciation of the saving grace of work, Emma’s call to students to do something real because what they do matters, and what they think matters, and Andrew’s joy in seeing “that tie in, that cosmic task of seeing something larger than themselves.” Here in these classrooms, good work enfolds the “doing” of the children and the “being” of the children into pathways of “becoming,” and pathways of becoming are what the teachers mean to open up as they guide children to find their work.

Work that Flows

For Ruth, Montessori is “the way of talking to children and the way of encouraging children to enjoy education.” The classroom feels right to her when the children are all working, and she tries to create the kind of environment where everyone can become absorbed in work:

A good day is when children are engaged and concentrating and quiet, ... when I have a classroom that is busy working.... That's a good morning to me. Everybody is happy and everybody is working.

Ruth's use of the phrase "busy working" is another instance where the language of Montessorians sounds like the language other teachers use, yet it is different. The difference appears in Ruth's description of a good day. The children are all busy working and quiet – that could be any teacher's description of a good day! But for Ruth, this quiet concentration is not associated with completing assignments, it is associated with a feeling of absorption and a sense that "the rest of the world sort of melts away:"

There are children upon occasion that will say to me, "Oh my gosh, the day's over with? It's time to clean up?" They hardly even noticed that the day has gone by. And when I hear that I feel good.

Ruth identifies a good feeling with this sense of hardly noticing that the day has gone by. She says she has experienced it herself: "I know what that feels like and it makes you feel really good, ... that flow." Flow is a word many Montessorians have recently adopted from Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) optimal experience theory.

Csikszentmihalyi's theory defines 'flow' as an intrinsically motivated state of concentration that merges action and awareness:

Optimal experience theory explores the role of subjective experience in the development of a person's skills and talents. The central concept in the theory is flow: an intrinsically motivated, task-focused state characterized by full concentration, a change in the awareness of time (e.g., time passing quickly), feelings of clarity and control, a merging of action and awareness, and a lack of self-consciousness (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). The experience is triggered by a good fit between a person's skills in an activity and the challenges afforded by the environment. (Rathunde & Csikszentmihalyi, 2005, p. 346)

Language Montessori associates with concentration resonates with words

Rathunde and Csikszentmihalyi use to talk about flow. Rathunde and Csikszentmihalyi (2005) use the word "task" where Montessori, in all her writings, uses the word "work;"

but both refer to intrinsically motivated activity. Rathunde and Csikszentmihalyi (2005) find that Montessori's pedagogical focus on the centrality of work as activity that fosters concentration is highly consonant with insights offered by optimal experience theory:

The strongest link between optimal experience theory and Montessori education is the centrality of the flow experience to learning, or what Montessori called spontaneous concentration. She believed that children's spontaneous concentration revealed the essence of being human, and there is little doubt that what Montessori had in mind when speaking about concentration was something akin to flow. (p. 346)

Both flow and spontaneous concentration describe a merging of action and awareness, and create a change in the individual. In Ruth's classroom, the world melts away as children concentrate on their work. She wants this feeling for her students because she knows it "feels really good." She has experienced flow herself.

In Emma's description of a good day in her classroom, she uses the metaphor of waves on the ocean to describe the feel of the day:

We closed our door, and we had our world for three and a half hours. It was just a little universe. The blue rug, and the materials. It's very natural.... It's just like waves on the ocean. It's still and it's quiet and then something builds up and something happens and then your classroom adjusts and those things ... happen in a very natural way, I mean you deal with them in a very natural way and the classroom restores its calm.

A good day in the classroom flows like waves on the ocean, and Emma, as teacher, seems to be in a state of flow. Calm rolls in and out powerfully, rhythmically, and naturally. Waves build up, crest, break, and roll across the sand. By closing her door, Emma is able to deal with the energies of the children in a natural way. It's quiet, then something builds up, and then the classroom adjusts, and "restores its calm." And in this kind of quiet universe, she feels comfortable in her own work. She describes how she feels:

Somebody's working over in one area of the classroom or a small group, and as a teacher you can comfortably go over there and know that when

it's time to move somewhere else all the children that you need will be available and all the materials and resources that you need are right there.

Emma's image of a good day adds a new dimension to the ideas of flow and calm concentration. She, the teacher, has created an environment in which all the materials and resources the class needs are right there. Then she closes her door, and she and the children have a quiet world for three and a half hours.

Here again, the language Montessorians use is the same as that of more traditional teachers, yet it is also quite different. Emma's door is not closed to protect her from obtrusive observations, or the incursion of fad-of-the-day initiatives brought on by curriculum planners. It is closed to create a quiet universe. One way Emma creates the possibility of flow is by closing the door to protect concentration. As a teacher, she, too, experiences a melting away of the outside world. She and her students enter into a quiet universe where they can concentrate and their ideas can crystallize. Rilke (1934/1995) portrays a quiet universe as a place where the outside world enters the inner-world and finds a place to grow and soar:

*One space spreads through all creatures equally –
inner-world-space. Birds quietly flying go
flying through us. Oh, I that want to grow,
the tree I look outside at grows in me! (p. 108)*

In Rilke's inner-world-space and Emma's quiet universe, slowing down allows for an opening up. In closing her door to protect concentration, Emma creates a space where the world can open up for her students, and for herself.

Trixie's description of a good day also invokes an image of the world melting away. For Trixie, the good days are wonderful and magical:

That day when a kid comes to you and ... says, "Can I practice that some more? Because I really like it!" It's also the day when little Johnny who is constantly up and wandering around has found his thing. And you didn't

necessarily help him to do it, he came to it on his own, but ... you've been trying to steer him toward it, to help him find it. When I know that everybody in that room has chosen their own work, and is happy doing it, that's a great day.... On those days it is magical. That's what makes it all worth it.... That's a wonderful day.

The magic happens for Trixie when everybody has chosen their own work, and is happy doing it. She attributes these great days to the children's efforts – little Johnny finds his thing on his own – but she feels good because she knows she's been trying to help him.

In a study of flow in teacher experience, Caouette (1995) offers a teacher's words, describing flow, that resonate with Trixie's words:

Then there was that sense of the relaxing, fulfilled, self-fulfilled feeling. I think of walking around and these kids are so focused into what they're doing.... You sit back and ... you enjoy what has been prepared here. It's a wonderful sense, ... that calm and serenity of when you've done something well and the kids now want to take off with it. (p. 99)

The sense of wonder arises from “what has been prepared here.” For Trixie, the sense of wonder comes because she knows she has been working toward helping little Johnny find his work, and now, on his own, he finds it.

Huebner explores the importance of a teacher's ability to experience awe and wonder:

The response of awe and wonder essentially is going beyond our abstraction of the phenomena and our objectification of it, to an awareness of its individuality – its subjectivity, its existence, and consequently our existence. Wonder is a form of participating with the time and being of the other.... We can help the child only if we respond to him also as a subject of mystery – producing wonder and awe in us. We can help only if we walk together with children, through time, with faith and love, made more effective through knowledge, but not replaced by knowledge. (1999e, pp. 6-8)

He finds that when a teacher responds to children as individuals whose world we share, the participation in the “time and being of the other,” produces a sense of wonder and awe, and this sense of wonder and awe allows the teacher to reach out and “walk together

with children.” Trixie finds wonder and magic when she sees she has prepared the way for “little Johnny,” and he has found something that holds his attention and interest. For Ruth, a sense of wonder comes when the rest of the world melts away. For Emma, a little universe opens when the door is closed and all the materials and resources she and her students need are right there. The sense of wonder in preparing an environment where children can find their work is magical to these teachers and brings meaning to their lives.

Work that Helps Their Hearts Grow Bigger

Anne’s good day is the day when her students take over the classroom because they have memorized it; they know it by heart. She has prepared the environment for them so that it reliably meets their needs. Their engagement with classroom life goes beyond learning the routines and expectations. They memorize the classroom and it becomes part of who they are, something in the heart:

They know what they need to do.... They begin saying to me, “Oh look, it’s almost time for recess, shall we ring the bell and get ourselves ready to go outside?”... “Shall we have a group and discuss this problem?” “I want to do a big chart. Can I go down and get the paper cart and then we can cut it off? I’ve got my scissors, I’ve got a buddy. Here we go.”

After over thirty years of teaching, Anne has an abiding trust in the power of that moment when the children take over the classroom because they know it by heart:

This is my 33rd year. I see it working. And I see that the children benefit from it just to the core of their being, and I trust that.... I am interested in seeing children grow and not just grow high. Grow out, have their hearts grow bigger.

Anne speaks of her children’s hearts in two ways. She says they memorize the classroom: they learn it by heart. The routines, materials, supplies, and expectations take on profound meaning for the children. They are touched to the core of their being, and Anne says their hearts grow bigger as they grow out into trusting independence in their world.

Kessler (2001) feels that children need to be with teachers who attend to their inner lives as Anne does:

When students work together to create an authentic community, they learn that they can meet any challenge with grace, with love, and with power.... When soul is present in education, attention shifts. We listen with great care not only to what is spoken but also to the messages between the words.... We concentrate on what has heart and meaning. (p. 110)

Like Trixie and Emma, Anne attends to the inner life of her children not just by listening with care, but by observing how they interact from the heart with work in the classroom. A good day comes when the environment she has prepared is exactly right for her students' heart work.

But even after 33 years of teaching, Anne acknowledges the challenge of creating a community in which children can act independently and “have their hearts grow bigger.”

Getting the group to solidify, to respect one another, to ... help one another.... that's the hardest part. For instance, ... the clean up ... is like, people moving from one side of the classroom to the other, and they really don't pay attention to the clean up. And if you let it drive you crazy, rather than think of the psychological characteristics, it really is draining. So how can I say it in a different way?... I really follow the psychological characteristics.

Anne says she follows the psychological characteristics so children not paying attention to cleanup won't drive her crazy and drain her energy. Lillard (1996) describes what Montessorians mean when they speak of psychological characteristics:

Montessori observed startling changes in children beginning at approximately age six.... The children's focus shifts from individual formation to development as social beings.... The mental powers of the earlier period ... are replaced by new intellectual endowments. Montessori referred to these new attributes of the second plane as “psychological characteristics.” (p. 44)

The psychological characteristics Anne attends to include an adventuresome spirit that

relishes challenges, a great capacity to concentrate and imagine, limitless curiosity about how they are connected to the universe, gregarious attachment to peers, a newly found power to reason and think abstractly, and intense questioning of right and wrong (Lillard, 1996). Anne holds Montessori's descriptions of these psychological characteristics of elementary children in her mind, and this helps her think of ways to communicate with her students that will call them to focused engagement with their work.

Interestingly, Anne also mentions that she has to watch and make sure that what the children are doing is "not playing." She watches for "the kind of work that ... gives order to a person's life and opens up to it infinite possibilities of growth" (Montessori, 1948/1967, p. 305); she also checks to be sure what she is seeing is not play. Play does not belong in the classroom. This might be true for any elementary school teacher, watching to be sure that children stay "on task," but Anne's use of the word play is somewhat different here. Her word reflects in mirror image Emma's emphatic message to her students, "We work here. This is what we do here." Play is not work, and work is what people do in Montessori classrooms, because doing work is how children grow.

Cossentino (2006) explores the distinction Montessori teachers make between play and work, and finds that a Montessorian's idea of work is similar to what many developmental theorists call play. Work in a Montessori classroom is intended to encourage joyful engagement that fulfills a child's natural developmental drives. An uninitiated observer, watching a 9 year old construct different size cubes with the wooden cubing material might see an attitude of fun engagement that suggests play. But work, for Montessorians, is very different from play. I have heard many Montessori students, when they hear someone call their activity "play," correct the terminology. This is their work,

and both teachers and students consistently call it work. Where play is an escape from life, or an imitation of life, work speaks to the child's self-creating life-force.

Gadamer (1960/2003) says this of play:

Play does not have its being in the player's consciousness or attitude, but on the contrary play draws him into its dominion and fills him with its spirit. The player experiences the game as a reality that surpasses him. (p. 109)

In a Montessori classroom, work is transformational engagement with activities that lead children to an understanding of who they are in the world, rather than an escape into a reality that surpasses them. Children's work guides them into a reality that meets their developmental needs and allows them to "grow out, have their hearts grow bigger:"

Work is not an escape from "real life," but rather a path toward its fulfillment.... The progressive effects of joyful work, freely chosen, are meant to lead to a particular vision of "goodness." And that vision not only links virtue to concentration, discipline, and order but also links human development to social progress. (Cossentino, 2006, pp. 68-69)

When she notes that the children in a Montessori school seldom refer to activities in the classroom as play, Cossentino asks them about the difference between work and play:

The word *play* is used liberally whenever the context is out of doors. Inside, however, seems always to be reserved for work. Puzzled by the distinction, I posed the question to a group of elementary students.... One explained that "Play is when you get hot and tired outside; work is when you don't get tired." Another clarified, "When you play, you get rid of energy. When you work, you keep your energy." (p. 74)

Cossentino notes that to a non-Montessorian, the children's work sometimes looks like play. Yet, Anne mentions that she has to be sure what the children are doing is not playing, because she has learned to trust the Montessori work recorded in her albums:

I see that the children benefit from it just to the core of their being, and I trust that. And I feel what the public school is doing with the testing is so destructive to the child, but even though it's happening with our kids it's not destroying them. It's not destructive because my environment for them

is very nourishing. It's like food, like having a really nourishing kitchen without any kind of sweets in it whatsoever.

For my conversants, being Montessori teachers means creating healthy environments that attend to the inner life of children. They work to create classroom spaces where children can engage joyously in work that helps them grow into responsible, independent and caring people. They want their students to become people who ask questions, people who connect what they learn with the world, people who make good choices for themselves and others, people who are aware and observant. A good day for the teachers is a day when children do good work. But their descriptions of a good day in their lives with children also carry an underlying sense that being a Montessori teacher, though fulfilling, can be complex and challenging. And as our conversations unfold, I also hear stories about hard days, days when it is not easy to help children find good work. These stories lead deep into the territories Gadamer (1960/2003) names when he talks about the interaction of technical knowing (*techne*) and the knowledge of right action that comes from experience: "There is a curious tension between *techne* that can be taught and one acquired through experience.... As knowledge, it is always related to practical application" (p. 315).

The Shared Journey

The work [of art] opens up a *world* and keeps it abidingly in force.... The world is not a mere collection of the countable or uncountable.... By opening up of a world, all things gain their lingering and hastening, their remoteness and nearness, their scope and limits.... The work moves the earth itself into the open region of a world and keeps it there. (Heidegger, 1993d, pp. 169-173)

Heidegger's reflection on the power of a work of art resonates with the complexity expressed by the six teachers as they talk about preparing classroom environments and helping children find work. The teachers believe that children's

authentic, self-chosen work helps them find ways to understand who they are, and who they are becoming. Good work, like a work of art, polarizes the children's attention, "opens up a *world* and keeps it abidingly in force." Good work draws children to explore how they are connected to the past, present and future. It "moves the earth itself into the open region of a world and keeps it there." Yet work that catches and holds the concentrated attention of children is not always easily found. As teachers share stories about the challenges of guiding children to work, we explore territories where the understandings gained in training are enriched day-by-day by knowledge from experiences gained as they journey side-by-side with particular children in particular places and times.

Guiding Children to Become Persons of the World

Emma says that some of her students choose good work on their own: "Those children are the ones that, for whatever reason, are able to see what they need to learn, and are able to direct themselves in that way." But she sees that children do not always make good work choices:

Some of them you really can't just follow.... I've been looking at those children who sit and read in a corner all day, no matter what I say, no matter what I do.... This isn't working. It's not working for them. They think it's working for them; it's really not. And it's not working for me.

What does Emma mean when she says, "They think it's working for them; it's really not. And it's not working for me"? What is it that is not working? Trixie tells a story that helps illuminate Emma's uneasiness. This story is powerful for Trixie. She calls it a vivid memory, and she refers back to it often in our conversations:

I will never forget the phone call that I got from a parent.... Her child had gone from the time he was itty-bitsy through sixth grade at [a private Montessori school.] ... I hardly knew the kid, but she called me after he graduated, and she said to me, "He just reads all day long.... And he

didn't learn how to do anything. He didn't learn how to manage his time. He didn't learn how to begin and end a project. He didn't know how. He didn't know anything."

In both Trixie and Emma's stories an image appears of a student who has become fragmented. His head is disconnected from the world. His doing does not connect with his being and becoming. He reads all day, but doesn't learn how to do anything. The student is no doubt learning as he reads, but he is not connecting physically with the world, and he is not learning to begin and end a project. His knowledge is limited, because it is not related to practical application. Trixie's vivid memory of the mother's call echoes Emma's uneasy sense that just sitting in a corner all day and reading isn't working for the child.

Trixie is deeply moved by the mother's statement, "He didn't learn how to do anything. He didn't learn how to manage his time. He didn't learn how to begin and end a project." When she looks around her classroom now, she is sometimes haunted by that call:

I find even now, with children in this classroom, that I have some who are not workers, and ... the teacher before, I know that the philosophy of that teacher is, "Whatever they do is what they do and that's work." But that's not me. I think that we need to know lots of things in order to make our way in the world and I think Montessori ... talked about being a useful citizen, what our responsibilities as citizens are. Well you can't be a useful citizen with no knowledge. You have to have knowledge.

I hear two separate concerns in Trixie's musings. First, she questions the meaning of children's work. She sees herself as different from teachers who think, "Whatever they do is what they do and that's work." She is also concerned that her students cannot be useful citizens without knowledge. What does she mean when she says, "You have to have knowledge?"

Palmer (1993, pp. 21-24) reflects on the history of words that are frequently used when we talk about knowledge. He says that fact, from the Latin *facere*, to make, suggests a knower gathering knowledge in order to construct a world. Theory, from Greek *theoros*, spectator, suggests an idea of knowledge as something we relate to from a distance. The Latin root of objective, meaning “to put against, to oppose,” suggests an adversarial relationship between knower and world. The root of reality, Latin *res* meaning property, suggests that we seek to know reality in order to lay claim to it as we lay claim to objects. He says it is crucial to examine what we mean when we speak of knowledge:

The shape of our knowledge becomes the shape of our living; the relation of the knower to the known becomes the relation of the living self to the larger world... The images of self and world that are found at the heart of our knowledge will also be found in the values by which we live our lives. (Palmer, 1993, p. 21)

Palmer finds that objectivism is embedded in schools: “Through the power of the ‘hidden curriculum,’ objectivism is conveyed to our students” (1993, p. 29). In the words often associated with scientific knowing – fact, theory, objective and reality – Palmer finds a view of knowledge that is fundamentally fearful and alienating: “We seek knowledge in order to resist chaos, to rearrange reality, or to alter the constructions others have made, to own and control knowledge” (1993, p. 24). In contrast to objectivism, Palmer explores ways of thinking about knowledge that focus on personal engagement with a search for meaning and truth:

When we examine the image hidden at the root of “truth” it turns out to be more immediate, grounded, and human than the words we now use to describe the knowledge we prize. The English word “truth” comes from a Germanic root that also gives rise to our word “troth,” as in the ancient vow “I pledge thee my troth.”... To know in truth is to become betrothed, to engage the known with one’s whole self, an engagement one enters with attentiveness, care, and good will. (1993, p. 31)

Davis (2004) also explores meanings of knowledge, and like Palmer, he finds two different orientations to knowledge. He finds that metaphysical orientations to knowledge represent knowledge as something apart from humankind, something transcendent that we struggle to find, like Palmer's objective knowledge. Physical orientations to knowledge, on the other hand, represent knowledge as being socially constructed through language or other symbolic representations of reality. Knowledge in these physical orientations is pictured as being embodied in action like Palmer's search for truth. What we know arises from our actions.

Trixie's idea that her students must have knowledge associates knowledge with active involvement in projects. She also connects knowledge to Montessori's (1948/2003) description of the preparation she envisions for elementary students: "Our pupils equipped in their whole being for the adventure of life, accustomed to the free exercise of will and judgment, illuminated by imagination and enthusiasm ... can exercise rightly the duties of citizens" (p. 1). Reading by itself is not enough, Trixie says, because "You can't be a useful citizen with no knowledge." Her understanding of knowledge is connected with her sense that she must help children to become responsible so they can take their place as useful citizens of the world: "While I want someone ... who's obviously very interested in what he's reading to read, ... on the other hand, [he] needs to know how to manage his time and how to begin and end a project."

Trixie's focus on wanting her students to become responsible citizens shapes her day-by-day decisions about when to guide and when to follow, even when she has the sense that she might sometimes err:

I guess my thought is, if I'm going to err, I'm going to try to err on the side of making sure that this child has life skills. And part of life skills is

learning how to manage your time and doing things actually that you don't really want to do sometimes, but you have to.... It is practical life, in making sure that we can carry out what we need to do.

Here, Trixie repeats the theme of the anxious mother who called her. She says the child needs to know how to manage his time. While she acknowledges that he is “obviously very interested in what he’s reading,” she feels that this interest is not enough. She feels the child needs to learn to carry out what needs to be done. She isn’t speaking of knowledge as a set of facts that must be transmitted. If she were, surely reading might be enough. She wants to see the boy actively engaged with the world. She wants him to be able to *do*. Is she thinking about what Grundy (1993), drawing on the work of Habermas, calls the technical interest?

The disposition which informs one kind of human action is the disposition of *techne* or skill. This is the disposition Aristotle identifies as being associated with the action ... in which the artisan engages ... called *poietike*, in English ‘making’ action. (p. 22)

Trixie says she wants her students to learn how to “carry out what we need to do.” Carrying out what needs to be done might mean learning skills, and learning how to engage in “making action.” But making and doing don’t seem to be the whole of Trixie’s concern. She also says, “It’s all about becoming a responsible human being, becoming an aware human being, becoming an observant human being.” She asks herself, “What do I do every day that makes my children appreciate what life is about?” What she wants for her students goes beyond skill development. Her naming of knowledge seems to be closer to Palmer’s (1993) idea that learners who seek knowledge of truth “engage the known with one’s whole self, an engagement one enters with attentiveness, care, and good will” (p. 31). Does her wish that students acquire knowledge mean that she wants them to be able to find meaning in their lives by engaging the known with their whole selves? Is

sitting in a corner and reading all day not working for the boy because it doesn't help him learn "what life is about?"

What Trixie calls knowledge seems more closely related to what Grundy (1993), again drawing on Habermas, calls the practical interest in curriculum:

For Aristotle it is the disposition of *phronesis* which gives rise to practical action. The term *phronesis* is often translated as 'practical judgment.' Knowledge is a component of *phronesis*, but not abstract propositional knowledge.... Practical judgment is different from strategic judgment which is associated with the technical interest.... Skill ... results in 'making' action. Practical judgment gives rise to interaction (practical action). (pp. 61-62)

In the practical interest in curriculum, knowledge acquisition does not require the mastery of a set body of objective, measurable facts in the interest of learning how to do something correctly. Head, heart and hand work in unity to connect the student, through a notion of goodness, to action in the world.

Huebner (1999a) hyphenates the word responsibility to draw out the meaning of curricular experiences that connect students to the world:

The student encounters other people and natural and man-made phenomena. To these he has the ability to respond. Indeed, education may be conceived to be the influencing of the student's response-ability. The student is introduced to the wealth and beauty of the phenomenal world, and is provided with the encouragement to test out his response-abilities until they call forth the meaning of what it is to be thrown into a world as a human being. (p. 112)

Huebner's view of knowledge as something that tests out students' response-abilities until they are able to make meaning of who they are in the world as human beings sounds closer to what Trixie means when she says, "I think that we need to know lots of things in order to make our way in the world." But she also ties the knowledge we need in order to make our way in the world to the notion of being a useful citizen: "I think Montessori ... talked about being a useful citizen, what our responsibilities as citizens are. Well you

can't be a useful citizen with no knowledge." These words carry Trixie's ideas about knowledge beyond personal meaning-making into the arena of civic engagement.

Perhaps what Trixie means by knowledge is closer to what Grundy (1993) calls curriculum as *praxis*, informed by an emancipatory interest:

If curriculum praxis is informed by an emancipatory interest, the question constantly to be asked is whether or not the curriculum practices operate to emancipate the participants through the process of learning.... This does not mean that the teacher no longer has any role in the selection of knowledge for study.... This means that the "teacher-student" has both the right and the responsibility for contributing to curriculum content. (p. 122)

Trixie and Emma both clearly feel a need to honor students' interests, and also a "right and the responsibility for contributing to curriculum content." Although they do not speak in terms of managing the children's work for them or controlling what the children learn, they express that following the child is not enough. What goes on in the classroom has to work for the children, and it has to work for the teacher. Some choices children make don't work. These choices don't lead them toward response-ability. Ruth also draws out this notion:

There aren't a lot of children that really accept that responsibility. There are a few.... They don't worry about what the other kids are doing and they move to their own drum beat.... On the other side of the coin, there are those who won't do anything unless you present it to them. And I have difficulty knowing when to just let them go.

Although she says some children consistently make responsible choices, Ruth sees many who don't find work or stay with it, and she struggles with her role as guide. When do you present work to the children, and when do you let go? Taylor (1991), too, lives her teaching life in a questioning stance, asking when she should step in and when she should step to the side:

It is sometimes appropriate to be reticent, ... so that they can be active in a different way, in the interest of letting learn. To teach in this way is not to cancel oneself out, but rather to listen openly, attentively, one must be silent and yet supportive, leaving space for learning.... To teach in this way means to create an atmosphere, to provide a space wherein students are listened to, listen to the other, or to the silence. (pp. 352-353)

Knowledge construction in these teacher stories is negotiated, as in Grundy's (1993) curriculum as praxis. The teacher attends to the students' interests, and creates an expectation of active work and student self-direction. As Taylor suggests, they create an atmosphere and provide a space to let students learn. Heidegger (1993b) expresses the complex interplay between what a teacher offers and what students actually learn:

Genuine learning is ... a taking.... Teaching corresponds to *this* learning. Teaching is a giving, an offering..... If the student only takes over something that is offered he does not learn.... Teaching therefore does not mean anything else than to let the others learn, that is, to bring one another to learning. (p. 275)

The teachers watch for signs that children are making good work choices, choices that lead to healthy development. They are actively engaged in helping children find good work, work that empowers them to grow into response-able citizenship. And everyday they ask themselves when to follow and let learn, and when to guide.

Ruth, Emma and Trixie all struggle with the meaning of the ideal, "follow the child." Their sense of what knowledge means sheds some light on this struggle. They speak about knowledge both in terms of Grundy's (1993) practical interest and the emancipatory interest. As they decide when to guide and when to follow, they know they want the children to find personal meaning, and become response-able, engaged, and active citizens. I return to the complexities embedded in the notion of "follow the child" at the end of this chapter. But, before doing so, I explore two side paths that allow for a deeper consideration of those complexities. First, I travel further into the territory called

“good work” to explore the teachers’ thinking as they negotiate this complex terrain in their interactions with students. Then I follow the teachers into the territory of self-doubt, suggested by Trixie’s “if I’m going to err.” In this territory, the being of the teacher in the classroom sometimes conceals the being and becoming of the children. And finally, I return to the question our conversations keep returning to: what does it mean to Montessori teachers to follow the child – to guide and be guided by children?

Calling Children to Inner Discipline

I turn now to the concern I hear in Trixie’s musings: “The teacher before, I know that the philosophy of that teacher is, ‘Whatever they do is what they do and that’s work.’ But that’s not me.” Emma echoes Trixie’s feelings when she expresses a strong belief that Montessorians are misdirected if they think of every work a child does as “good work:”

The Montessori community as a whole, I don’t know if you find this, we seem to have a lower standard. If the work is child-directed we seem to hold it to a lower standard than it ought to be held to. I feel that. I feel that strongly.

She illustrates this idea with a story about the first year with her upper elementary class:

I started off with all the lessons on Vikings.... We broke into small groups to do our research, and we did it by fundamental needs.... The Montessori research project, everybody’s done it. Very normal, these kids should have done the same procedure.... But the work that they turned in, if they turned it in, was horrendous. So I knew right then I had a lot to do on work behavior and the quality of our work.

For Emma, Trixie and Ruth there are child-directed activities that are not “good work.”

In Montessori’s words, some work does not polarize the child’s attention, activate the will, and lead to an impulse toward normal, healthy development. Sometimes when children are busy in the classroom, they are just busy; they are not really working.

Trixie articulates an elusive difference between making a child busy and helping her find good work:

I can make a kid busy. I don't want to.... I really don't want to! But I can see that some children keep picking the same stuff.... So those are the hard days because you think, "Okay, follow the child, what does that mean?"... Where do you stop following the child and start leading the child?

What does it mean to Trixie when she sees children picking the "same stuff" over and over? She says it's hard for her, and she contrasts those hard days with the great days:

When I know that everybody in that room has chosen their own work, and is happy doing it, that's a great day. Those days don't come all that often. There's always two or three or four or maybe even seven who can't do it. They can't do it and you try to lead them to something, but it doesn't do the trick for them.

Trixie's great days come when everybody in the room has joyously chosen their own work. Free choice of work and happiness are her benchmarks. Yet, clearly, she means more. If one of the children is just reading all day long, or "picking the same stuff," she worries. Work is more than freely chosen activities. Good work, the work that makes the days magical, is freely chosen, meaningful, and empowering. It teaches children how to start and end a project, it helps them learn what life is about, and it helps them become responsible, observant and aware.

Montessori (1949/1995), after 40 years of working with teachers-in-training, came to believe that even the best teacher training program is not enough to prepare teachers completely for the challenge of calling to children in a way that will draw them into the goodness of work:

Just as we must call a child's name before he can answer, so we must call the soul vigorously if we wish to awaken it. The teacher ... must face this question of the call, practically and alone. Only her intelligence can solve the problem, which will be different in every case. (p. 268)

Montessori's text, read against Trixie and Emma's concerns, opens a view into the terrain teachers negotiate with their students as they interrogate the meaning of the ideal of good work. Montessori says:

The inexperienced teacher, filled with enthusiasm and faith in this inner discipline which she expects to appear in our little community, finds herself faced by no light problems.... Are the principles she learned mistaken? No. Between her theories and the results to which they lead, something is missing. It is the teacher's practical experience. (Montessori, 1949/1995, p. 263)

Pedagogical wisdom that arises from practical experience is needed in this territory. The presence of materials is not enough, freedom for the children is not enough, and the Montessori training is not enough: "The teacher ... must face this question of the call, practically and alone. Only her intelligence can solve the problem, which will be different in every case" (Montessori, 1949/1995, p. 268) It is the intelligent, practical wisdom of the teachers that is foundational when teachers face the "question of the call."

Emma and Trixie seek to call their students to freely chosen work that is meaningful, and empowering, but Emma finds that children are not ready to choose their own work until they have a sense of inner discipline. Before they can hear the call of their own hearts drawing them toward work that will "keep alive the inner flame," they hear Emma calling them to disciplined activity. She has a very clear sense that she is being true to her training when she holds firm to her expectations for good work:

It was made clear to me, at least in my primary training, that the flip side of freedom is discipline. And if you don't have the discipline to handle the freedom, you don't have the freedom. It's very clear. Freedom comes when you can handle it. Otherwise you're just controlled by your impulses. You're not making a choice. The inner discipline is what enables the child to choose.

What does Emma mean by discipline? She names two polarities: impulse and inner discipline. Without inner discipline, she says, "You are just controlled by your impulses."

This statement appears to be dissonant with Montessori's observation that it is children's impulse (*horme*) toward self-chosen activity (*work*) that leads to normal, healthy development. But Emma learned in her training that children are not ready to make choices if they are just being controlled by their impulses. It seems she means something different from *horme* when she says, "Otherwise you're just controlled by your impulses. You're not making a choice." She associates discipline with not being controlled by impulse.

For some theorists, discipline is a word that disguises power inequities. Alschuler (1980) believes that oppressive situations lead to conflict, and that in schools where teachers hold all the power and students hold none, the situation is oppressive. Basing his analysis on the work of Paolo Freire, he believes that discipline problems can be overcome by working to create a world in which it is "easier to love" (p. 11). Is Emma talking about a need to hold what Kreisberg (1992) calls "power-over" her students until they settle down, control their impulses and get to work? Is she asking that children be "quiet, obedient, orderly, passive ... staying 'on task' no matter how dull, meaningless, or demeaning the task may be" (Clifford & Friesen, 2003c, p. 164)? Listen to her description of her class when they reach a point where they seem to her to be doing good work:

They were magnificent! ... I had a group focusing almost all their energy on animal life and I had another group focusing all their energies on the symbols of the states and how they could display them artistically.... Then I had another group ... doing Native American research, the Southeast Indians. And they're holding up books, "Oh, my gosh! Did you see this?"... There were many different things going on. And their work turned out beautifully. Every single group had managed themselves. It was incredible!

These are excited children. They are focusing their energies. They are holding up books, calling to each other, “Oh my gosh! Did you see this?” Their work is beautiful, and they are managing themselves. They are disciplined from Emma’s point of view, but they are certainly not “quiet, obedient, orderly, passive,” and their work is not “dull, meaningless, or demeaning.” The children, Emma says, are magnificent! And their work is incredible!

The roots of the word discipline reflect Emma’s image of her students when they are controlled by inner-discipline. From the Latin word *discipulus*, meaning pupil, discipline refers in its oldest sense to the active engagement of students with learning. Etymologically, discipline was originally used to distinguish students’ active work with learning from the abstract knowledge of teachers (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 2003). Emma’s students are disciples of their learning in her story. They are actively engaged with learning.

When Emma says the flip side of freedom is discipline, then, she is not talking about passive obedience, she is talking about active, whole-hearted participation in learning. Does she mean that disciplined children know how to follow classroom rules? Margaret’s voice offers a contribution here. As she talks about her life in the classroom, she connects classroom discipline and students’ work to her studies of self-governance in graduate school. When she sees a child expressing enthusiastic interest in something, she believes what she is seeing is self-governance:

Self-governing, to me, has something to do with ... being able to make choices without somebody telling you what those choices are going to be....
 “I’m going with this idea and I really want to explore it and I want to find out as much as I can about it. And it’s really taking me to new places. And now I’m seeing connections over here to this part, and to me.” That demonstrates self-governance, that a child is so interested in the subject that they really want to go with it.

When Margaret talks about self-governance, she talks about freedom of choice in her lower elementary classroom. Like Emma, she values energy, enthusiasm and curiosity. She connects discipline and self-governance to enthusiasm for work. Dewey (1916/1966), too, connects the idea of discipline with self-guidance and active engagement with learning:

A person who is trained to consider his actions, to undertake them deliberately, is in so far forth disciplined. Add to this ability a power to endure in an intelligently chosen course in the face of distraction, confusion, and difficulty, and you have the essence of discipline. (p. 129)

Dewey's disciplined person endures in the face of distraction and difficulty. He concentrates and considers his actions. Margaret values self-guidance and the ability to persevere in pursuing personal interests.

She also articulates a sense that control of behavior should come from children, not from rules laid down by the teacher. When she talks about discipline and self-governance, she tells a story about the small town she grew up in:

My dad borrowed money on his word, and then he paid it back. And that's the way people did it in the town that we grew up in. So that is operating on what they call the "norm level." So you don't have any stricture or a rule that says that "Okay, once you borrow this money, you pay it back in four days, and then there's interest." It's that "I borrowed this money, and I can pay it back because I, within myself, have the capability of being honest and fair. And I can reciprocate that to another individual."

What she wants for her students is inner discipline, "the capability of being honest and fair," and being able to reciprocate honesty and fairness to others. Discipline, or self-governance, is not about following rules for Margaret; it is about people in a community being honest and fair. Van Manen (1991), too, finds that discipline should not be rule-governed: "The maintenance of discipline in schools should not be based primarily on juris-prudence but on pedagogical principles. The question should always be, 'What can

this child, and our whole community, learn from this?’” (p. 12). Like van Manen, Margaret thinks of self-governance in terms of learning. Her focus is on helping children learn to self-check:

Rules actually are created because individuals or groups of individuals have a difficult time operating at the norm level. So this whole idea of self-governance, to me, is trying to help children be able to be open and vulnerable enough to operate at a level where they can internally say, “I can do this. I can self-check on my own. I can be in self-control.” So that there’s this stricture of all this overlaying of former rules that doesn’t have to be there.

Margaret wants her students to be able to self-check, to have self-control, and she says they have to be “open and vulnerable” in order to self-check. Discipline grows from trust in self. She tries to help children be able to trust themselves, so they will be able to self-check. What she wants to do is establish a classroom norm of self-trust that leads to openness and self-control, so that students, through their concentration, can engage actively with learning about their world. Van Manen agrees that discipline should arise from a personal sense of order:

Order that is not personal, order that is imposed and equated with rigid rules, will ultimately defeat learning. Thus, pedagogically significant discipline comes from a strong personal orientation to order – an orientation that arises as disciplined passion, or passionate discipline, from within the self. (1991, p. 200)

Margaret journeyed through many years of educational experiences both in this country and in Africa before she became a Montessori teacher. She taught for two years in a private Montessori school, then came to work in a public Montessori school. Now, after years as a Montessorian, she calls herself a “newer Montessorian,” and she feels she is still sorting out the issue of self-governance:

Now the trick for me, in this environment, is figuring out some of that... I’m working on this whole concept of ... being able to be self-governing. And just me, as a newer Montessorian, learning how to do that, these are

some things that are totally not sorted out for me yet. I came into a class that had some really complicated issues that we were working on.

Like Emma and Trixie, then, Margaret struggles with Montessori's idea of self-chosen student work in the context of a class with complicated issues. She tries to learn how to help the children gain the trust in themselves she senses they need before she can establish a norm of self-governance, and she is somewhat confused as she listens to the voices of school system specialists with a more traditional orientation:

We started talking about when is self-governance possible? Does one have to be Skinnerian at the beginning of a continuum to get the self-governance jump-started? And we went through all these conversations about ... intrinsic motivation versus extrinsic motivation, and when is intrinsic motivation taught, and is there one end of this continuum where some children just can't get it and they need extrinsic motivators?... I'm curious about why they say that, you know? That some kids can't operate under intrinsic motivation.

Struggling with the notion of how self-governance might be taught, she is not convinced that behavior modification techniques are appropriate.

Margaret listens to the voices of school system specialists, but there is resistance in her listening. She wonders why they say that some children must be extrinsically motivated. She hears a dissonance that makes her challenge the assumptions imbedded in the suggestion that some children must be externally motivated. Levin (1989) suggests that listening for dissonance is hard work:

The critic needs a good ear for this work. Such listening does not come naturally or easily; it needs to be developed, sharpened, directed.... Communication requires more than the successful performances of speech-acts; it requires, among other things, the capacity to be touched and moved by what one sees, and the capacity to listen carefully and with an open mind. (p. 102)

Listening to the dissonance, Margaret recalls a memory of a moment during training when her consciousness opened to children's experiences as they learn to make choices:

[Our teacher] had us get down on our knees and walk in the room on our knees to look around at the materials on the shelves.... And I remember being overwhelmed by seeing all these closed boxes, ... but I also was really curious about what was in them. And I remember those first two impressions.

She imagines the children feel both curious and overwhelmed by the work she offers them, and her response to this intuition echoes Emma's statement, "Freedom comes when you can handle it." Margaret says:

For some of the kids, it probably is very overwhelming to come in and have choice, and to figure out how to make those choices.... And I try to think of the kids that are overwhelmed by this freedom. So I bring them back to limited choice and try to give them two choices. "Okay, it looks like you aren't able to choose, and that's okay. So ... here are a couple of ideas. Which of these two ideas do you feel you'd be willing to choose?"

Margaret voices a view of discipline in this story that seems to connect not only with self-trust, but also with the teacher's empathy and caring. As she strives to establish a norm of self-trust, she voices trust in the children, but she also insists that they work:

Some of our children, are going to do the maximum negative thing they can do because they don't feel worthy.... And so figuring out how to help: "Yes, I know you can do it, and I know you can come back to work, and I know you can make this choice to work. I believe in you. And I believe in you enough to know that you are going to finish this work."... If we don't expect this of them, it's a sign of, "Yes, here's another person who doesn't care enough about me to expect anything from me."

Margaret, with her focus on self-governance, adds immensely to the picture of what discipline means in a Montessori classroom. Discipline is not about passive obedience, and it is not about following rules. It is about establishing norms of self-trust. She is firm in her expectation that children choose work, but she is also caring and empathetic. She imagines what children must feel, and tries to help them make good choices. She believes a classroom norm of self-trust needs to be nurtured, and she strongly believes that firm insistence on work is a caring response to children. If you

expect work of children, she says, you are letting them know you care about them and believe in them.

I turn back to Emma now, as she talks more about the challenges of helping children find good work:

I think ... if there's enough guidance in place for the children to understand what qualifies as meaningful work, then following them can mean letting go.... And looking for that opening in interest or in skill that you can use to sort of draw them out.... You never know what's going to work. We do cartwheels, don't we? Don't you feel like that? "Oh, today I'll sing an aria, and tomorrow I'll do cartwheels!" And maybe some of it will connect with some child in a way that wasn't before, that will open them up.

Like Margaret, Emma voices empathy and care. She conjures an image of active and energetic engagement with her students' learning. She guides them to a place where they can see what "meaningful work" looks like as she looks for an "opening in interest." She feels like she is turning cartwheels to draw them out and singing arias to open their hearts: "You try everything to reach them a little bit."

Discipline, the flip side of freedom, has to do with reaching children, establishing trust. Emma, like Margaret, says classrooms must feel safe to the children. She wants "an environment in which children flourish, in which it's safe for them to follow their natural tendencies, to explore, to perfect." In her words, we see an image of teacher preparing the way so that children feel safe in following their deep inner impulses to action, although they are not controlled by passing impulses. Discipline also is tied to the teacher's energetic involvement with children's interests. Emma does whatever she can to reach every child in her class, to find openings in interest or in skill that she might use to draw children out, connect with them, open them to new possibilities. Some days she feels like she's singing an aria, and some days she feels like she's doing cartwheels.

Discipline is also tied to the teacher voicing care by setting firm expectations and holding to them. I return now to Trixie, whose concerns I started with. Trixie, who wants children to learn how to begin and end a project, and find meaning in life, and contribute to the world as a responsible citizen, says that helping children find good work sometimes means directing a child to work even when the child resists:

And you can try and you can try and you can try and then after that, it's time to say, "Okay, over here. You're doing it."... I don't recall, ever in my reading, coming across [Montessori] saying never, ever force a kid to do something that's essential for their development.... I don't think that's what she meant by follow the child. I don't think she meant let them go and do whatever they like. I don't think she meant that at all.

Trixie holds up her classroom practices to examine them in the light of lessons she learned in training, but she trusts her own decisions. Years of experience with children have given Trixie, Emma and Margaret an overarching vision of childhood's pathways, and this vision helps them know when to firmly direct children to their work, when to steer gently, and when to let go. Again, the conversations pull me back to the question, "What does that mean, follow the child?"

Thinking about the teachers' stories has uncovered more about the complexities folded into the question, but before turning back to explore this question again, I return to one more question raised in Trixie's remembrance of the mother's phone call. In the middle of the story she says:

Where do you stop following the child and start leading the child? And that is a really difficult thing ... It's still a real gut wrencher. Because you just don't know. But I guess my thought is, if I'm going to err, I'm going to try to err on the side of making sure that this child has life skills.

Trixie's gut is wrenched, because she is not absolutely sure of herself. She worries about erring. Here she opens a vista I glimpsed in conversation with each teacher, and I want to explore this landscape before I return to the question of what it means to guide and be

guided by children. Each teacher, in one way or another, expresses a sense that the work is made difficult by ghostly memories of their own childhood schooling and self-doubt.

When the Being of the Teacher Comes Into Play

Sometimes the mountain
is hidden from me in veils
of cloud, sometimes
I am hidden from the mountain
in veils of inattention, apathy, fatigue,
when I forget or refuse to go
down to the shore or a few yards
up the road, on a clear day,
to reconfirm that witnessing presence. (Levertov, 1992/2003, p. 71)

Changes come with journeying, invigorating changes in perspective and orientation. And life with children is lived in the company of change. But, as Levertov says, sometimes we feel inattentive, apathetic, fatigued. There are times when we forget the journey or refuse to set out. There are times when the spirit of our being is veiled from us. Trixie sees some children's authentic, self-creating work being masked by unfocused busywork; she sees other children, who, for whatever reason, need guidance to find work. But, as she says, the work of children can also be inadvertently hidden from the teacher's view by the inner life of the teacher:

And that is a really difficult thing.... It's very hard and after teaching 15 or 16 years it's still a real gut wrencher. Because you just don't know. This is where ... my being, who I am, comes into play.

Trixie powerfully names what each teacher voices, "My being, who I am, comes into play." What is it in the being of the teacher that comes into play in the classroom, casting veils between teacher and children?

Veils of Childhood Memories

Ruth names one part of her being that complicates her efforts to follow the child. She says, "It's very hard to follow the child because there's that inherent relationship

where the adult wants to guide.” She evokes an image of adult-in-charge, a powerful cultural icon. I find this image in Montessori’s first book, published in 1912:

We know only too well the sorry spectacle of the teacher who ... finds it necessary to discipline her pupils into immobility and to force their attention. Prizes and punishments are every-ready and efficient aids to the master who must force into a given attitude of mind and body those who are condemned to be his listeners. (1912/1964, p. 21)

The teacher, in 1912, appears in Montessori books as one who disciplines pupils into immobility in order to force their attention. After 40 years of preparing teachers for a different way of being-with children, Montessori (1949/1995) returns again to the powerful image of teacher as one-who-must-be-obeyed:

Discussion of character training usually turns upon the questions of will and obedience. These in the minds of most people, are opposed ideas, since education is so largely directed toward the suppression or bending of the child’s will, and the substitution for it of the teacher’s will, which demands from the child unquestioning obedience. (p. 252)

The teacher, in this 1949 rendering, may not insist on immobility, but still demands from the child unquestioning obedience.

In 1992, Kreisberg, too, frames our culture’s idea of normal relationships between teacher and learner in terms of domination:

Relationships of domination are played out extensively every day between teachers and students, and always this domination is justified as in the best interests of students.... Students are confined to places where they are told, and too often accept, that someone else knows what is good for them, where someone else controls their lives and daily choices, and where their voices are patronized or ignored. Their success in school is measured by their submission to their teachers and parents, by their willingness to accept the roles and standards that have been set for them. (1992, p. 6)

Ninety years after Montessori’s description of “the master who must force into a given attitude of mind and body those who are condemned to be his listeners,” Clifford and Friesen (2003c) evoke a similar image:

Sent to school as very young children, both boys and girls learn very early that the Procrustean standards of “normalcy,” “being good,” and “doing school” create a very narrow band of acceptable thought, speech, and action. Children are forced to learn very quickly how to discipline their bodies, how to color between the lines, how to print neatly, how to please their teachers by doing “their work” in a neat, orderly, and timely fashion. (p. 164)

Teacher as enforcer of the standards of “normalcy” is a cultural image that traverses a century, and Ruth and Trixie both feel the power of this image in their classroom work. Ruth is mindful that she, as adult, is pulled by this cultural image to be the guide and not the follower. Trixie, too, relates feelings of self-doubt brought on by a gulf between her own school up-bringing and the Montessori way-of-being:

I always think, “I’m not there yet.” I’m not even kind of there yet.... I feel the lack in my ability to give to the kid.... It’s actually so foreign to my own raising up and my own schooling that it’s still very hard work for me to incorporate that kind of thinking in.

She feels she is “not there yet,” because following the child is foreign to what she experienced in her raising up as a child at home and at school. Indeed, her use of the phrase “raising up,” conjures an image of adults reaching down to pull her up to their standards. Trixie worries that what she perceives as deficits in her own being interfere with her ability to help her students in their journeys-of-becoming:

It’s all about becoming a responsible human being, becoming an aware human being, becoming an observant human being, and I, myself, have not become those things yet, so it’s kind of hard to help the children get there.

Trixie worries that she is less responsible, aware and observant than she needs to be, and she questions her judgment at the times she feels drawn to say to a child, “Okay, over here. You’re doing it.”

Andrew voices a similar concern that he might be too directive at times, and he names another feature in the landscape of teachers’ being-in-the-classroom. He says:

I think that we're all human in that way, and ... of course there are moments where I wonder. Yeah, there are moments. It's an intricate puzzle. I really think it is. It's an intricate puzzle to solve. There are moments that I think, "Am I being too directive? Am I?"

Wondering and questioning if he is being too directive, Andrew also says, "It's an intricate puzzle." The pathways that lead through the territory of his being-as-teacher are labyrinthine. Journeying to the heart's center, the place where he can be attuned to the experiences of children and can rightly decide when to be directive and when to step aside, there are many twists and turns. As van Manen (1991) says, "One of the most fundamental conflicts in the pedagogical world consists of the tension between freedom and control" (p. 61). Every teacher voices a sense of being overwhelmed at times by the complexities of learning to balance guiding with being-guided, especially because of the influence of memories of their own childhood schools.

Veils of Sound and Energy

When our listening really is deeply rooted in the body's felt sense of being, it is opened out to the sonorous field as a whole and becomes thereby an organ of Being, an organ of recollection, gathering up into itself the soundfulness of the field. (Levin, 1989, p. 219)

Levin explores the deep connections between listening and being, and finds that listening can be an organ of Being. Trixie feels her listening openness is sometimes a handicap. Her being as a teacher is sometimes overwhelmed by her openness to the many voices in the classroom. She would like to be able to "put up with the buzz in the room," but can't always do so:

The day that I always want to have is ... the day when I have patience enough to put up with the buzz in the room without saying, "You know there's an awful lot of talking going on here, let's get back to work." I know that where I'm at during the day has a huge impact on the class.... It doesn't so much depend on them, I think, as depend on me.... I have extremely good hearing, and it's a real handicap because I hear everything and I can't get rid of it sometimes.

Sound in the classroom is one of complexities of being a Montessori teacher. Children in Montessori classrooms talk with each other and with the teacher throughout the day.

Although silence is practiced daily, most of the day is filled with spontaneous conversations. Trixie's sensitivity to sound can make it hard for her to have patience in a room full of children who are talking as they work. Levin (1989) says that our openness to sound "*informs* our listening, because what is retrieved is a bodily carried *pre-understanding* of our relationship to Being" (p. 231). As she hears the sounds of conversations in the classroom, Trixie sometimes has a hard time attending to the being of the children because the sound overwhelms her own being: "Where I'm at during the day has a huge impact.... It doesn't so much depend on them, I think, as depend on me."

Trixie wants to be able to put aside her own needs and attend to the children in what Levin (1989) calls "ontologically caring understanding:"

To retrieve it ... is to transform our perception, our auditory relationships, giving to the sonorous being that calls upon us the openness of an ontologically caring understanding. Within this more expansive openness, their sounding forth is different, for sounds sound differently when they are let go, released from our perceptual grasping and holding, and are allowed to sound forth in the open dimensionality of their being. (p. 231)

Margaret and Anne both express a similar wish to be able to remain caringly open to the being of their students. But like Trixie, Margaret says she sometimes feels overwhelmed by all the activity and noise:

I feel like there are times when I definitely need to have centering, where I have to just step away. I need peace from the fray. The integration of material is very invigorating, challenging, and exhausting at the same time. I find that always. That's a constant tension for me.

As she talks about her need for centering and for peace from the fray, the image of teacher-as-juggler appears:

How many balls in the air can any one human be balancing and guiding and keeping an eye on and helping to nurture?... When there's a lot of research going on in the room, when there's a lot of energy and people are really into their work and the noise level might be higher, what effect does that have on a human being, both the child and the adult?

She sees herself as keeping many balls in the air, sometimes too many balls. She is fearful of dropping one of these very important balls. She is balancing curriculum integration, guiding and keeping an eye on children, and helping to nurture. And there's a lot of energy. And there's noise. And sometimes she needs peace. Levin says the noise of modern living sometimes cuts us off from ontological openness:

In order to hear something we must first *give it our silence*.... Cultivating silence, however, is extremely difficult in our time. The more it is needed, the more it withdraws, giving way to the noises of modern living that cut us off from its teachings of wisdom.... The conditions of life in the modern world are not hospitable: outside us, there are too many man-made noises; and the pressures of life today make it difficult for us to form, within ourselves, a *sense* of the opening silence. (1989, p. 232)

Anne, too, sometimes feels a need for peace from the fray:

Sometimes it drives me crazy. But they'll be coming up all day long, "Did you know that, did you know that?" I go, "Okay, okay!" And it's so much constantly happening.... It does drive me crazy when there's just too much. It's either too much noise, too much movement, too many different things happening.

Too much movement, too many different things happening, too much noise, she says, can drive a person crazy. What does Anne mean when she uses the word crazy to describe the state she is driven to when there is too much constantly happening in the classroom?

Crazy derives from the Norse word *krasa* meaning to dash into pieces (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 2003). Do Trixie, Anne and Margaret feel dashed into pieces by noise?

Andrew's use of the word puzzle resonates with the idea of being dashed into pieces. A jigsaw puzzle is a picture that has been cut into pieces. In order to solve a jigsaw puzzle, you work to put it back together, to make it whole, and Andrew says being a Montessori

teacher is an intricate puzzle to solve. But for a person to feel broken into pieces does not feel like a puzzle to solve, and when Margaret and Anne talk about this aspect of their being-in-the-classroom, they voice aggravation, a desire for peace from the fray, and a need for centering. Their being-in-the-classroom sometimes feels broken into pieces by “the buzz in the room.”

Veils of Time and Planning

Van Manen (1991) explores several levels of reflection that occur in teaching. Some reflection occurs as teachers think about their interactions with students. Some occurs as teachers are in the midst of their days with children. Some occurs at the moment of interaction between teacher and child, and some occurs retrospectively. He distinguishes pedagogical reflection from systematic planning, and finds that although lesson planning is indispensable, it can lead teachers into problems in their relationships with children:

Curious consequences flow from planning when this planned instructional program becomes too fixed, too inflexible, too prescriptive for life with children. For one thing, inflexible planning may freeze the body of knowledge that is otherwise dynamic, vibrant, and alive.... As I plan deliberately into the future I project myself.... I strip myself of part of my own subjectivity and of my immediate and active relation with the world. (van Manen, 1991, pp. 103-104)

Margaret, who names noise and energy as two parts of her lived experience that sometimes complicate her ability to be present to the children, also names curriculum planning as a tension:

The integration of material is very invigorating, challenging, and exhausting at the same time. I find that always. That’s a constant tension for me.

Margaret’s naming of the tension of curriculum planning resonates with van Manen’s sense that curriculum planning is inherently in tension with a teacher’s reflective

pedagogy. Aoki (2005h), too, sees tensions inherent in the teacher's relationship to curriculum-as-plan:

In curriculum-as-plan ... teachers are asked to be doers.... There is forgetfulness that what matters deeply in the situated world of the classroom is how the teachers' "doings" flow from who they are, their beings. That is, there is forgetfulness that teaching is fundamentally a mode of being.... It is a world of face-to-face living. (p. 160)

Trixie, too, feels tension as she lives with the realities of planning lessons. She feels deeply responsible for meeting the individual needs of each child in a classroom full of children. Responsibility for "getting it done" weighs heavily on her mind:

I get caught up in the, "Oh, my God, I have to get this done," particularly now that I'm in public school. That weighs so heavily on my mind.... As much as you try to meet individual children, there are time prohibitions against even doing that, which is very hard. I think it's hard on all of us because we hold very high expectations for ourselves and when we can't meet them, it's really tough.

A sense of having to get curriculum done is connected here with being in the public school. Being in the public school, what Trixie calls her public school being – who she is as a result of her own childhood in public schools – comes into play. Her own public school being, which makes her want to get curriculum done, is in conflict with her Montessorian being, which wants her to slow down, as she says: "back up and do over and meet at different levels." And she also names another tension in the air: "As much as you try to meet individual children, there are time prohibitions." Jardine, Clifford and Friesen (2003) tell us: "In ancient Greek mythology, *Chronos*, the god of time, was known for eating his children" (p. 11). Trixie might add that it eats teachers, too.

Ruth echoes Trixie's sense that there is too much to teach, and not enough time:

The Montessori curriculum, if you take all the state curriculum out of it and you just think about the Montessori curriculum, it is so rich and so intricate and so one side works with the other side, ... there's just too much for one person to do and do it right.

She feels there is too much to do and do it right, and Trixie says it's hard, because, "We hold very high expectations for ourselves and when we can't meet them, it's really tough." Even under the best of circumstances, curriculum plans, the multiple and sometimes conflicting needs of individual children, and pressures of time bear down on the being of the teacher.

Shifting the Veils

Located in the between with my eyes leaning to the left I hear, "For those who know nothing about Zen, mountains are but mountains, trees are but trees, and people are but people." Then, following my eyes leaning to the right I heard, "For one who has studied Zen for a short while, mountains are no longer mountains, trees are no longer trees, and people are no longer people." So enlightened, one eye to the left and the other eye to the right, I listened: For those who understand Zen, "mountains are again mountains, trees are again trees, people are again people." (Aoki, 2005f, p. 432)

Aoki's reflections on the powerful shaping effect of perception, frames curriculum as a movement through life that continuously shapes and reshapes our understandings and our values. Huebner echoes this characterization of pedagogical relations: "To be teachers means re-shaping our values as we ourselves are being re-shaped" (Huebner, 1999d, p. 381). As Anne, Andrew, Ruth, Trixie, Margaret and Emma reflect on their lives in the classroom, they hold their classroom practices up to many lights. Sometimes what they find is puzzling to them. They question as they journey through their days; they shift their perceptions, they question again. They journey in the between, as Aoki calls it. With their eyes leaning one way they see their classroom experiences in the light of their own childhood schooling, and they wonder if they are getting curriculum done in a timely enough manner. With their bodies tensed, they ask: "How many balls in the air can any one human be balancing and guiding and keeping an eye on and helping to nurture?" With their ears attending to the "the conditions of life in

the modern world, ... too many man-made noises; and the pressure of life today” (Levin, 1989, p. 232), they struggle to stay focused and patient in the midst of the buzz of noise and energy. With their eyes leaning another way, they see their classrooms in the light of their trainers’ wisdom, and wonder if they are being response-able enough, observant enough, aware enough.

When Trixie examines her classroom practice in the remembered light of her trainers’ wisdom, she also wonders if she is living up to the expectations of the Montessori community: “Every time I go to a refresher course or I do something else, I do feel that whole feeling that you’re a fraud.... I’m sure it isn’t what they mean for us to feel.” But this lingering self-doubt, this idea that maybe she’s a fraud, is not deep. She has an underlying faith in the practical wisdom she has gained over time, and she allows herself to question the authority of those trainers’ ideals:

When I think back on lectures that I had from the teachers at [the Montessori teacher training course], I think, “You know what? One of those teachers only had two years of experience in an elementary classroom. Am I really going to judge myself on what her ideal was?”

And she also questions the idealized accounts she reads in contemporary literature:

I do think that some of the situations where you read contemporary people who are Montessorians, ... I just would love to go and see.... I don’t think it’s the real McCoy. I mean, you just don’t hear enough people who have experience talking about that.

As she holds her practice up and examines it in the light of “the ideal,” Trixie tells this story about helping children move from manipulation of math materials to abstract thinking:

It was sort of beat into my head that children automatically move to abstraction.... But there comes a time when you say “You know what?... That’s enough.” So I sit them on the floor and I put those racks and tubes in front of them and ... I say, “Don’t touch that! Now, talk me through this.” And they feel great ... because that was the confidence thing that

they were lacking, “I know what to do.” And there’s one kid who kept wanting to touch and I’d go, “Don’t touch that!” And if anybody could hear me saying that! If Grazzini came over from the pedagogical committee and heard me say that!

She laughs at the idea of Camillo Grazzini, the quintessential Montessori elementary trainer, peering into her classroom and hearing her say to a student, “Don’t touch that!” Her wry smile suggests she feels as though she might be drummed out of the Corps for her defiance of the Code of Conduct. But although she begins the story saying these ideas were “beat into her head,” she ends the story with a light touch. The image of Grazzini hearing her say, “Don’t touch that!” makes her laugh. It presents a funny contrast that breaks the tension for her, because she has an underlying faith in the wisdom of practice. She feels confident that what she is doing is right, and this confidence grows from her years of experience with children. The children’s response is reassuring to her:

That kid needed that confidence thing.... There is not one lesson in my album that actually is a ‘going to abstraction’ lesson ... But I believe that’s the thing that we have to do for them because otherwise they’ll be 48 and they’ll still be counting out beads and I’m not willing to let that happen.

As Montessori (1949/1995) says, each teacher must face the question of how to call to a child’s soul alone: “She must face this question of the call, practically and alone” (p. 268). So Trixie sometimes steps outside the limits of her albums. But outside the boundaries of her albums, even when she feels a touch of wry defiance, she still feels guided by her training. Like Emma, she is confident in the underlying wisdom of the traditions passed on by the trainers. And even as she holds her classroom practices up to the light of training, her eyes move, and she sees them in the light of her own practical wisdom. She knows a lesson she gives is right when she sees her students gaining confidence and life skills. She follows Montessori’s ultimate advice, “She was, she said,

like a finger pointing to something beyond herself, and she asked them to look not at the outstretched finger but at what it was pointing to – ‘the child’” (Kramer, 1976/1988, p. 366). Trixie attends to Montessori’s outstretched finger, but she also, always, attends to the children in “this school, this classroom, this moment” (Jardine, 1998, p. 101).

Trixie, Emma, Anne, Andrew, Ruth and Margaret draw out their students’ interests, guide exploration, open doors to new possibilities, and sometimes step outside the bounds of lessons found in their albums. Following the child, for these teachers, is a complex and delicate task. The ideal of a peaceful classroom full of children happily engaged in the authentic, self-creating work of childhood can be hard to realize for many reasons. They tell of children so focused on social needs they don’t attend to their own work. They worry about children who spend their time on meaningless busywork, or follow a passing fancy. They watch to be sure children are working, not playing. The noise and activity in a room full children can be overwhelming. Trying to meet the individual needs of so many children can weigh heavily on the teacher’s mind. Our culture’s dominant paradigm of teacher as adult-who-controls can stand in the way of following the child. Sometimes a little voice inside asks if they are being true to their training. The teacher’s own self awareness can slide into self-doubt in the face of these challenges.

Having explored these terrains, I return now to Trixie’s question, “What does that mean, follow the child?” Each teacher asks this question as we talk, and hidden in the question are complex and tangled understandings, “thicket and bramble” (Piercy, 1994, p. 128), that shine forth in their daily journeys, allowing them to slide aside the veils that mask the being and becoming of the children who share their journey.

Following the Child

Andrew, Anne, Emma, Margaret, Ruth and Trixie share understandings of what it means to be a Montessori teacher, but each also has a unique and personal vision. Each traveled the pathways of training at a different time, in a different place, and beginning from a different starting place. And more importantly, each is finding what it means to be a Montessori teacher in the shared company of unique and particular children. They interpret the foundational text of Montessorians, “Follow the Child,” in ways that make sense for “this school, this classroom, this moment with this child” (Jardine, 1998, p. 101). Each teacher expresses a sense that correct interpretation does not mean exact replication of the original. Gadamer, in reflecting on the interpretive, rather than canonical work of performing artists, touches on the interpretive work teachers do as they re-enact Montessori traditions passed on in training:

We do not allow the interpretation of a piece of music or a drama the freedom to take the fixed “text” as a basis for arbitrary, ad-lib effects, and yet we would regard the canonization of a particular interpretation ... as a failure to appreciate the real task of interpretation. A “correctness” striven for in this way would not do justice to the true binding nature of the work, which imposes itself on every interpreter immediately, in its own way, and does not allow him to make things easy for himself by simply imitating a model. (Gadamer, 1960/2003, p. 119)

The teachers try to stay true to their training, but they interpret the “text” of their training in response to the children in their presence here and now. Being true to the pedagogical traditions learned in training means the teachers strive for a deeper understanding of the “true binding nature” of those traditions, as they attend to where their students are in relation to the world they live in here and now. Gadamer (1960/2003) believes this is the only way the real meaning of any text can be understood:

Every age has to understand a transmitted text in its own way.... The real meaning of a text ... is always co-determined also by the ... situation of the interpreter.... Not just occasionally but always, the meaning of a text goes beyond its author. That is why understanding is not merely a reproductive but always a productive activity as well.... Understanding is not, in fact, understanding better.... It is enough to say that we understand in a *different way*. (pp. 296-297)

The teachers view the ideal of following the child from their places within the lived realities of their classrooms. Following the child means steering a little, singing a bit of an aria, sometimes even saying, “Okay! Over here! You’re doing it!” The meaning of the text, “Follow the Child,” is not found for them in a simple reproduction of the Montessori traditions passed on in training. It is uncovered day-by-day as they interact with children in their own ways, and as they step back and reflect on those interactions.

Casey’s phenomenological description of guiding and being guided resonates with the teachers’ stories of classroom life:

What guides the guide ... is a matter of *local knowledge* based on an extreme sensitivity to precise features of the vicinity ... Local knowledge ... does not call for long-term systematic surveys that find expression in maps, where everything is “labeled and arranged.”... To guide, and above all to be guided, is to draw on this sensory basis for knowing where one is. And to know where one is, is to know where one is located in relation to the local landscape, on its terms and its way. (Casey, 1993, pp. 251-252)

The teachers step off the well-labeled map provided in their training as they navigate with their students through the “local landscape” of their classrooms. They look to the “precise features of the vicinity” as they try and try again to gain their students’ trust, build their confidence, present content knowledge and skills, and help them move toward responsible independence. As they live their day-to-day lives in watchful awareness of children’s work, these experienced Montessori public school teachers locate themselves in relation to their students on their own terms and in their own ways.

A guide is something or someone that steadies or directs motion or that guides the eye (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 2003). The teachers' guidance of their students is directed and steadied both by their understandings of the traditions learned in training and by practical wisdom gained over years of attending to individual students. They live in-between the text of their training and the context of their lives in the classroom.

Journeying Together in Community

We mean ... that each child's voice can be heard, and that their speaking can make a difference to our curriculum decision making. Improvising on children's responses ... demands a commitment to recognizing human relationships as a fundamental source of knowledge.... We work in a constant state of watchfulness. Children's authentic offerings are often made tentatively.... They can be subtle and easy to miss, but they are nevertheless vital components of a lived curriculum. (Clifford & Friesen, 2003a, p. 21)

Clifford and Friesen listen for children's voices, recognize that their relationships to children are an important source of knowledge, and live in a "constant state of watchfulness." Emma's words resonate with their description of classroom life as she talks about the notion of teacher and students learning to trust each other:

It's their classroom.... The classroom belongs to the children. So ... if you can't connect with the children, if you can't help them see your vision or if you can't see their vision, things aren't going to work out. Because the kids feel ownership of the room.

She says that vision-sharing needs to go both ways. The teacher needs to help the children see her vision, but she also needs to see their vision, because in a Montessori classroom children feel ownership of the room that transcends the teacher's presence. In order to connect with the children, the teacher must help them see her vision, and she needs to see their vision. She needs to be part of the community of relationships in the classroom.

Pigza explores vision as a gateway to relationships:

Eyes do more . . . than perform the physical functions of gathering data that are translated into vision. “Vision . . . is also a capacity, a potential that can be developed and realized in a number of ways” (Levin, 1997, p. 8). As elements of the lived body, the eyes are gateways to lived relationships. By gazing into another’s eyes, I can begin to understand him or her, and I place myself in the possibility of being seen and understood by the other. (Pigza, 2005, p. 198)

When Emma says that following the child means connecting with children by seeing their vision, and by helping them see her vision, she is talking about understanding them, and being understood. Following the child means entering into the community of relationships in the classroom by seeing and being seen.

The word *community* comes from the Latin *communis*, which means a fellowship, a community of relations or feelings (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 2003). Emma develops the notion of trusting relationships, as she talks about helping her students form a community in which each individual feels supported. She sees each child as an individual, with a unique, different, and valuable personality, and she wants her students to share this vision:

I’m really starting to understand that what makes our schools and our classrooms different and special is this seeing . . . each child as an individual person, and creating room for all kinds of people, . . . the relationships, and the fact that we keep our kids together and that we encourage the kids to support each other.

She experiences her classroom as a fellowship where there is room for all kinds of people. In this fellowship, teacher and children see each child as an individual person, and the children learn to trust and support each other.

Margaret adds to the idea of sharing the children’s vision, as she speaks of helping children learn to trust not only the teacher and each other, but also themselves:

They're on their journey, building.... So this whole idea of self-governance, to me, is trying to help children be able to be open and vulnerable enough to operate at a level where they can internally say, "I can do this," ... being able to make choices without somebody telling you what those choices are going to be.

Margaret says that children have to trust themselves if they are going to make meaningful choices, so she attends to whether a child is developing self-trust. For Emma and Margaret, being guided by children means helping students learn to trust the teacher, support each other, and trust themselves. Hooks (2003) also links trust with community:

Creating trust usually means finding out what it is we have in common as well as what separates us and makes us different.... And it will always be vital, necessary for us to know that we are all more than our differences, that it is not just what we organically share that can connect us but what we come to have in common because we have done the work of creating community. (pp. 109-110)

Margaret and Emma follow the child by doing "the work of creating community." Then, as they journey in community, they celebrate the unique and valuable in each person in the community, and they look for ways to see and be seen through shared visions.

Journeying Together Through Time

Emma adds another dimension to the notion of "creating a room for all kinds of people," as she talks more about the growth of her classroom community over time.

Wenger, McDermott and Snyder (2002) find that a sense of community grows over time, as trusting relationships are established through mutual support:

Building trust ... and discovering the kind of ideas, methods, and mutual support that are genuinely helpful take time. Most of all, community members need to develop the habit of consulting each other for help. As they do this, they typically deepen their relationships and discover not only their common needs, but also their collective ways of thinking, approaching a problem, and developing a solution. (p. 84)

Like Wenger, McDermott and Snyder, Emma feels a community of relations develops over time.

I know our students get a sense of community and a social development process that's very unique in the public school system. And that comes from being in a room for three years with the same group of kids and the same teacher. You develop a relationship in our classroom.

Emma's reflection links classroom relationships to her idea of students learning to support each other, and she says that this kind of supportive relationship "comes from being in a room for three years with the same group of kids and the same teacher." Each year the third year students leave and a new group of first year students enters, but a core of the class stays the same from one year to the next in a Montessori classroom. As she talks about attending to the growth of a sense of community in her classroom, she tells a story about a conversation that transformed her classroom's culture.

The first year Emma was with this class, she spent a good deal of time conversing with them about polite and respectful behavior:

At class meetings, at small group meetings, [we talked about] if someone is bothering you, how to tell them politely to leave you alone, as opposed to, "I hate you, get away from me!" which was the habit.

Over the course of the year, she shared with the children her vision of positive and respectful behavior. The second year with this class, some of the older students started out the year picking on first year students. Emma sat down with the older students to talk about classroom culture:

We talked about how the classroom was before I was here – and they were all here then... We talked about a classroom culture and how ... we treat people a certain way because of how we were treated. So you might think, as a sixth grader, that now is your opportunity to be the tough guy in the room. You think that because every sixth grader you've ever known has modeled that for you. Those sixth graders thought it, because it was modeled for them.

In this conversation at the beginning of the second year, Emma begins by telling the older students her understanding of their vision, that it's their turn to be the tough guy now. But

she holds true to her vision of a supportive classroom community, and as she continues to voice her ideal and listen to their thoughts, the class begins to share her vision. The conversation that follows leads them to a big moment:

We have an opportunity to completely transform the culture of the classroom. And we talked about how it could even go so far as to, once we were gone, even if I weren't here, or the children weren't here, that if we set in place a situation where people are supportive of each other and positive with each other, that that's just what kids learn, and that's what kids will do. And it could go on forever. So that was a really big moment.

Emma is clearly the guide in this story. She begins with trying to understand what the students might be experiencing, and she listens to their voices, but she holds true to her vision. Through conversation she leads them to share her vision. She touches their imaginations by painting a picture for them that carries their thinking beyond the moment, into a sweep of time that encompasses past and future. Months later, one of the sixth graders who was picked on when he was a fourth grader, comes up to her and asks her if she realizes that no one in the class is picking on others this year. The conversation opens the students' hearts. They accept Emma's vision of classroom life as a community.

But the story also touches on the theme of time. Emma has the conversation in her second year with the group. In the first year she has many conversations about polite and respectful behavior, but it is in the second year that students are ready to open their hearts. Applebee (1996) reflects on the power of time to shape our present and future:

Knowledge-in-action is positioned in an interesting way with respect to both the past and the present. A tradition (of ritual, of art, of inquiry, of behavior) as it exists at any point in time is oriented toward present activity: To participate in a tradition of discourse is to affirm (and also to define) its present relevance.... The past is always a living part of the present, and in a very real sense dependent on it. (p. 16)

As Emma talks with her class about the past, present and future of their classroom culture, she builds on past conversations and shared experiences to reach their hearts.

Being in the same classroom with the same teacher and the same core group of students creates possibilities of becoming that might not be possible during one year of a child's life. The children can learn, over time, to encourage each other, and to support each other, and that allows for the growth of self-trust. With self-trust children become able to lead their own journeys-of-becoming. Each child becomes a very real and significant person in the classroom, and each travels on her journey-of-becoming in relationship with significant others over the course of a shared journey through time.

Journeying Together as Leaders

Anne, too, works over time to establish a class culture in which her lower elementary children are able to encourage and support each other:

Year after year ... when the kids came back from their holiday ... they came in knowing what their plans were and their leadership skills were fast in place.... And sometimes ... I'll hear them repeating several things that I say. Like when we come to a circle, ... "I like the way Joey is sitting," because they want to go outside.... And they sit down and they pull themselves together. And that's what I want them to do, to take charge.

Anne is guide in this story, just as Emma is guide in her story, but the guidance is indirect. Her leadership is like what Sergiovanni (2007c) calls servant leadership:

Servant leadership provides legitimacy partly because one of the responsibilities of leadership is to give a sense of direction, to establish an overarching purpose.... For trust to be forthcoming, the led must have confidence in the leader's competence and values. Further, people's confidence is strengthened by their belief that the leader makes judgments on the basis of competence and values. (pp. 50-51)

Anne wants the children to know how to lead respectfully. She speaks with respect, and the children adopt her language. She prepares an environment that encourages leadership, and the children use the leadership skills they gain to carry out their plans. As guide, when she reflects on behaviors or attitudes she wants to influence, she is guided by her trust in Montessori's theory of child development:

Trusting, and not only trusting that it will happen, but, with the experience that I have had, seeing that it will happen and just trying to think in my own mind of different ways ... to meet a need or to get attention or to move the group on. So I really follow the psychological characteristics.

Anne's Montessori training in the psychological characteristics of elementary age children provides the lens through which she sees her classroom, and her own practical wisdom guides her as she guides them: "How can I say it in a different way?" She attends both to the needs of the individual children, and to the needs of the community. Lambert (2002) examines communities as ecosystems, and finds that a social organization is a living web of interconnected and interacting relationships:

To understand that leadership is embedded in the patterns of relationships and meaning-making in a social organization is to notice that everything is connected. The system is dynamic, interdependent in its learning processes. One leader doesn't direct the learning of others (although those participating as leaders frame, and invite others into, opportunities) – the learning of each is dependent upon the learning of the other and of the whole. (p. 49)

Given her developmental lens, Anne searches within herself, drawing on years of experience, to find ways to say what she needs her community of students to hear in ways that will meet a need, or get attention, or move the group on:

One of the children, the leader, rings the bell and announces what's happening then. And ... they really don't pay attention to the clean up.... But if you ... just have them re-think their group and what their group is doing, it is amazing how motivating it can be. I mean, it's really the way it should be. You know, the classroom can run itself.

For Anne, following the child means searching for ways to reach her lower elementary students by thinking of their developmental needs. She wants to help them see her vision of a community in which they can trust each other to provide leadership.

Bolman and Deal (2001) call this aspect of leadership "giving authorship:"

Giving authorship provides space within boundaries. In an orchestra, the musicians develop their individual parts within the parameters of a

particular musical score and the interpretative challenges posed by the conductor.... The leader's responsibility is to create conditions that promote authorship. Individuals need to see their work as meaningful and worthwhile, to feel personally accountable for the consequences of their efforts, and to get feedback that lets them know the results. (pp. 111-112)

Anne draws on her own practical wisdom to make her understanding of the traditions learned in training come to life in her classroom. Over the course of their years together, she models respectful language, and the children adopt this language with each other. They speak kindly to each other in the interest of accomplishing shared goals. They want to get outside for their recess, so they encourage each other to come together and get ready. They learn to take charge. Their leadership skills are fast in place. Anne rejoices in her students' empowerment. She celebrates their plans and their leadership skills: "It's really the way it should be!"

Journeying Together to Explore the World

Knowledge is, first of all, a relationship with something that was, at one time, strange. Thus knowledge is a consequence of our being called forth by the otherness of the world.... We circle the stranger, poke, and pinch it, ask it questions by a variety of "if ... then ..." manipulations until we presumably know it in its comings and goings. Scientific knowledge ... describes a dance of love with other phenomena.... It is a consequence of meeting ... and saying, "This is the way I dance with the world. Is it also the way you dance with it? If so can we dance together?" (Huebner, 1999c, pp. 366-367)

Huebner, in his reflections about scientific exploration as a form of dancing with strangeness, plays with the idea that children experience learning content knowledge as an encounter with otherness. Garran (2004) explores the idea of otherness in the work of

Levinas:

Levinas examines the relationship with the Other. In that relationship, the Other has the potential to address us. The Other causes us to reflect. When we "brush up" against the Other, we feel its skin. It can startle us and make us withdraw or it can cause us to linger and to hope that our arms will touch again. (p. 18)

Huebner's story, read against Levinas' philosophical unfolding of the Other, provides a bridge that seems to gather into a unity Emma's, Margaret's and Anne's stories. Emma guides her class to dance with the otherness of community. Anne guides her class to knowledge of the otherness of leadership within community. In Margaret's story, she teaches steps in a dance that leads to self-trust and meaningful self-guidance in the dance of exploration. Trixie's voice joins the conversation about teacher as guide, as she tells of a time when she felt she was successful in sparking children's interest, and keeping a good balance between teacher-guidance and student-exploration.

Trixie's story draws forth notions of following the child that resonate profoundly with Huebner's reflections. The state she teaches in requires fourth grade students to learn about electrical currents, and Trixie hopes to help her students think about the relationship between this very specific content knowledge and their understandings of their place in the universe. It is near the beginning of the year, and she starts the lesson by retelling the story of the creation of the universe, in order to introduce the idea of the movement of electrons that produces electrical currents:

There were some children totally engaged from the very minute I opened my mouth to tell them the story of the Big Bang and there were others who were rolling around wondering when they could have their snack. But eventually, by the time we got around to electrons moving through a wire and making currents, they were all engaged.

Being teacher-as-guide, Trixie maps out the territory of exploration. She begins with the strange beauty of the idea that we are all part of the flow of matter and energy through the universe, and then moves into exploration of the territory named: "Students will investigate the characteristics of electricity." Being teacher-as-follower, she attends to the fact that some of the children are "rolling around and wondering when they could have their snacks," but as guide, she keeps going until they reach a point where they

“were all engaged.” She invites her students to “circle the stranger, poke, and pinch it, ask it questions by a variety of ‘if ... then ...’ manipulations,” but the invitation is made in hopes that her students will go beyond the sense of otherness and strangeness, and understand who they are in relationship to this other being, “the characteristics of electricity.” Trixie wants more for them than simply investigating the characteristics of electricity:

If it was just exploration that we wanted the children to do, I do think that in many cases they will come to conclusions that make sense.... But I do think that also there’s a lot of times that exploration doesn’t result in anything, because exploration needs to be guided in some ways.... I don’t think Montessori would have ever advocated any frivolous exploration. She was a scientist and there was no frivolous exploration going on, on her part.

In this story, Trixie’s guidance moves her students onto a pathway, catches their interest in exploring, and also provides a protective shield against frivolous (from the Latin *frivol-us*, meaning fickle, unreliable) exploration. Her pedagogical stance hearkens to the root of the word guidance, the Teutonic verb *witan*, meaning I have seen, hence, I know (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 2003). Trixie serves as a steady, far-seeing, knowledgeable guide on voyages of discovery. She is not controlling the journey, but she has an overarching vision of the exploration’s possibilities that allows her to steer gently, and to provide leadership and direction so that the journey can lead to the children being meaningfully engaged in their doing, their being, and their becoming.

Journeying Together in Hope and Faith

The child is the point where all that the human being really is and is meant to be can be revealed.... Children at the beginning of life are not indifferent, but enthusiastic; they are open and on this foundation they build themselves and can build a better world and a better human society.... The child says: “Work and be interested in something! Give all your strength to something; then you will find both strength and peace.” (Montessori, 1951, p. 6)

The International Montessori Congress held in London, May 1951, was the last one Montessori attended. Speaking informally in the evenings (Kramer, 1976/1988), Montessori revealed her hopes for a better future for humankind, and her faith in children's enthusiastic openness. Following the child, guiding and being guided by children in Montessori classrooms, continues to be a pedagogy of hope and faith. Everyday teachers and children enter a space that gathers past, present and future into a unity. Teachers' past lives enter this space. Their visions of a better world and a better human society dwell here, along with their hopes for the children they teach. They bring with them a faith in the power of meaningful work to engage and energize their students' developmental energies. Children, too, enter this space carrying past experiences. They bring with them a sense of who they are and who they might become, and they come wrapped in ribbons of their families' past lives, hopes and dreams. The teachers' guidance of their students is directed and steadied by traditions learned in training and by the wisdom of practice. In-between the text of their training and the context of their lives in the classrooms they search for understanding of what it means to "follow the child."

Following the child, guiding and being guided by children, means to them that a teacher sees the children's vision, and helps them share her vision. It means creating possibilities of becoming over years spent together. It means seeing each child as a significant individual, and guiding the children to support each other. As the children learn to value and accept themselves and each other, it also means guiding them in a dance with the strange otherness of content knowledge. Guiding and being guided means reaching out in kindness to call to the souls of children, and leading them to engage with open, enthusiastic attention to both their work of learning and their work of becoming.

Aoki (2005d) finds that the essence of teaching is tactful leading that follows the pedagogic good of the students. His words resound with Montessori's advice to teachers to attend to the paths that open when children's wills are in agreement with their activities: "Pedagogy means, in the original Greek sense, leading children.... Teaching, then, is a tactful leading that knows and follows the pedagogic good in a caring situation" (p. 191). For Montessori teachers, tactful leading means acknowledging and honoring children's healthy drive to grow up, expressed in an impulse to engage in deliberate, life-affirming activity. Following the child means attending to the pedagogic good. The teachers, therefore, stand ready at all times to call children toward what Montessori calls good "work:"

The teacher, when she begins work in our schools, must have a kind of faith that *the child will reveal himself* through work.... The teacher must believe that this child before her will show his true nature when he finds a piece of work that attracts him. (Montessori, 1949/1995, p. 276)

When Sergiovanni (2007d) says that leading requires both hope and faith, his words resonate with the meaning implicit in the phrase, "follow the child:"

The evidence suggests that hope can change events for the better.... Faith and hope go together. Faith comes from commitment to a cause, from strong beliefs in a set of ideas, and from other convictions. Hope is so closely linked to faith that the two blend together into one.... We find faith in what is good, and this faith becomes the basis for hopefulness. (pp. 153-155)

Emma, Anne, Trixie, Andrew, Ruth and Margaret have faith that their students can find meaning in their day-to-day lives in the classroom as they engage actively in self-creating activities. They believe that, on the foundation of enthusiasm and openness, children can build not only themselves, but also a better world and a better human society. Their faith in children is intertwined with hope for a better future. As

Sergiovanni says, they find faith in the goodness of children’s work, and this faith becomes the basis for hopefulness.

Journeying Together into an In-Between Space

When as teachers we teach with love, combining care, commitment, knowledge, responsibility, respect, and trust, we are often able to enter the classroom and go straight to the heart of the matter. That means having the clarity to know what to do on any given day to create the best climate for learning. (hooks, 2003, p. 134)

Teaching with love, for hooks, means making a commitment to enter the classroom ready to lead students “straight to the heart of the matter” by engaging caringly, competently, knowledgeably, responsibly, respectfully and trustingly with students. The loving teaching style she portrays “opens the space for students to learn, getting at the root meaning of the word to educate: to draw out” (p. 130). In spite of the elusive quality of children’s authentic work, and in the face of noise and distractions and self-doubt, I hear echoes of the Latin root of education, *educare*, as I listen to the voices of Anne, Emma, Andrew, Ruth, Trixie and Margaret. I hear a call to lead forth, to elicit, to evoke, to draw out and to open up in Emma’s thoughts about the meaning of following the child:

Within each child is this unlimited human potential and the idea of allowing that to develop, and creating an environment in which children flourish, in which it’s safe for them to follow their natural tendencies, to explore, to perfect.

Emma’s words present an image of teacher preparing the way so that children can follow their own inner directions. Her words also underscore the importance of coming to a situated, practical understanding of what “follow the child” means.

Emma also names a tension in her practical, situated understanding as she reflects on Montessori’s ideas:

As a curriculum theorist ... she was really, really about following the child, even at the elementary level. I think, at least to some degree, we believe that there is an essential curriculum, or there is essential information that the children need to master. She really didn't think that.

In their Montessori training, teachers create huge curriculum albums, and once they enter the public school, imposing state standards are layered on top of these curriculum albums. The weight of all these curriculum albums and state standards creates a sense of needing to get curriculum done, named by all the teachers. In public schools, they journey with children into an in-between space where getting curriculum done is always in tension with the ideal of following the child. Emma is following the child as she stays alert to her students' responses to work, sensitive to their trust, and attentive to indications that developmental energies are being fostered. But she always is aware of curriculum that needs to get done. As she says, there is an underlying assumption that there is "an essential curriculum, or there is essential information that the children need to master." And so even though she is aware that Montessori, as a curriculum theorist, did not believe children need to master an essential curriculum, Emma feels she must guide her students to make a plan for their day so they can move forward and learn what they need to learn.

Trixie, too, says that she guides children to choose work that will move them through a body of knowledge they need to acquire:

Choice also has to be given in response to seeing that a child is learning what they need to learn.... Although I have seen some purist types who would say, "If they want to read, let them read. If they want to write stories, let them write stories."... No, sorry. I've got to go get the math material. You have to learn something about science now.

Trixie expresses the tension between curriculum-as-plan and curriculum-as-lived experience (Aoki, 2005h). She presents work to engage her students' concentration, and

she follows their progress by watching their engagement with work, but she also keeps an exact and detailed record of curriculum “covered.”

As they guide their students to make good choices, these public school Montessori teachers feel profoundly accountable for their students’ well being. Their classroom lives are tightly woven with threads of accountability. They feel accountable for seeing their students’ vision of the world, and for hearing their voices, and for connecting with them. They feel accountable for sharing their vision of responsible, engaged living. They have a passionate and deeply personal vision of what it means to be accountable. At its core, this vision is very different from public school notions of accountability that focus on taking a count of the accuracy of work completed, quantities of homework turned in, test scores and quiz scores and project rubrics.

The felt need to get curriculum done on time is always in tension with a vision of teaching as following the child. They live in an in-between space created by this tension, face-to-face and side-by-side with growing, changing, questing young people. They create environments that open spaces for students to learn, but in public schools their classrooms exist within a larger environment with a very different focus. In the next chapter, I journey with the teachers into the arena of public schools, where this tension sometimes stretches teachers thin and leaves them feeling fragmented. As they talk about their teaching lives in public schools, they tell of encounters with state tests, administrative observers, yearly and quarterly benchmarks of achievement, and other outside forces that reach through their classroom doors, threatening to interrupt their focus on the pathways of their shared journeys with children.

Wind tugging at my sleeve
 feet sinking into the sand
 I stand at the edge where earth touches ocean
 where the two overlap
 a gentle coming together
 at other times and places a violent clash. (p. 23)

Anzaldúa speaks of cultural borderlands. At her borderlands, the powerful opposition of differences can give way to ambiguity, even intimacy. Her feet sink into the soft, wet sand and at times there can be a gentle coming together like meeting of earth and ocean. Her borderlands are places of transition, where notions of *us* and *them* are vague, yet powerful, and color the lives of borderland inhabitants:

Borders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish *us* from *them*. A border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge. A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition. (Anzaldúa, 1999, p. 25)

My study reveals another kind of borderland, one not based solely upon political borders, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or gender, but rather upon ideological borders regarding teaching. Like Anzaldúa's borders, there is a constant state of wary distinction between "*us* and *them*" within Montessori public schools. Boundaries between Montessori and traditional teaching practices are not marked or patrolled in these borderlands. Montessorian works side-by-side with non-Montessorian. The boundaries in Montessori public schools are subtle, and the space between worlds sometimes shrinks in the closeness of shared spaces. At times resentment colors interactions of the two, but at other times respect reaches across the invisible edges between two worlds. The Montessori teachers I spoke with all experience tension in their in-between space, but there is also joy and a sense of purpose.

Anne, Andrew, Trixie, Emma, Margaret and Ruth are all Montessorians whose professional lives bring them into public schools. Their Montessori sensitivities touch public school sensibilities, sometimes rubbing and chafing at the edges where they meet. In a broader sense, all Montessorians dwell on the edges of our society's notions of education. Even private Montessori schools exist within a society where the dominant attitude toward schooling values "instrumental rationality, ... molding the young, treating them as resources for the state, for the business community, for the new technologies, not as existing persons in quest of some significant life" (Greene, 2001, p. 165). They are on edge, part of two worlds at the same time. Montessori teachers in public schools dwell in a liminal space where anything can happen.

Passage Into a Liminal Space

You know that the limen is the top beam of a doorway, a passage that designates movement between one space and another. So the limen, or liminal, experience is experience in the middle, experience that is situated somewhere special, where it can be felt and thought about and played with. (Grumet, 1998, p. 144)

Emma, Anne, Ruth, Andrew, Margaret and Trixie enter into the liminal space of Montessori public schools along a variety of pathways. Each teacher has been drawn-in to a Montessori way-of-being and has settled into this chosen homestead with a sense of having arrived home. The *ethos* of Montessori is now part of their own characteristic spirits. Each is habituated to a Montessori way-of-being, to "something in the heart" that calls them to guide children on their journeys of becoming. Now, drawn by friendship, fleeing from administrators who make decisions contrary to their Montessorian understandings, wanting to bring Montessori to public school children, or looking for professional growth, they enter the domain of public Montessori schools, a place in the middle, where two worlds touch.

In public schools these teachers move back and forth across the doorsills that connect their classrooms with the hallways of traditional schools. A focus on childhood's pathways is complicated on both sides of the doors that open between traditional ways-of-being-with children and their Montessori *ethos*, and the teachers' words evoke both a sense of their attachment to their Montessori way-of-being and defensiveness in the face of the otherness of public school traditions.

Moving From the Here-In-View-of-There

I cannot grasp what is there in the next stage of my journey except in relation to the here of where I am just now. My journey, in other words, is not simply from here to there but... from the here-in-view-of-there to the there-reached-from-here. (Casey, 1993, pp. 278-279)

Ruth and Trixie both set out on journeys into public schools when their private schools move away from Montessori ideals and they are called by an opportunity to work with Montessori teacher-friends who are public school principals. From their vantage points within changing private schools, public Montessori schools look appealingly home-like. Displaced by private school administrative changes, they move to a new homeplace in public schools because they hope that in public schools, with Montessori leadership, they can again feel at home. Their journey is inspired by a perception that the new public school homeplace will be more home-like than their private schools.

Ruth leaves her private school because she feels the administration is "taking all the Montessori out:"

I was very disillusioned with the way administration was going... In one year we went from five lower elementary classrooms to three, and the next year to two. And I did not like the direction the headmaster was taking the school. She was taking all the Montessori out. She was making it college prep.... They were taking away from the strong Montessori base.

Ruth's voice, as she tells this story, rings with a sense of indignation and loss: loss of classrooms, loss of faith in the administration's path, and loss of a "strong Montessori base." The headmaster is remaking the school in the image of college prep schools.

Words like rigorous and competitive spring to mind when a school is named college prep; these words are very different from Ruth's naming of Montessori as a "way of talking to children and ... encouraging children to enjoy education." Ruth feels the headmaster is taking away something she holds dear. Making the school college prep takes the Montessori out of it. College prep displaces her from the private school.

Trixie also believes her private school is losing its Montessori focus, and she leaves the school along with several of her friends: "All of us left at the same time just simply because we'd had enough." Trixie says she is disturbed by actions taken by the governing board of the school:

They were a typical example of an uninformed board. Everything that came down the pike they wanted to try and adopt and it was like, "It's a Montessori school!"

Trixie and her friends leave because the board is uninformed: board members do not seem to understand that "It's a Montessori school!" She is bothered that they want to try out "everything that comes down the pike."

Trixie's words, like Ruth's, are indignant. With insufficient knowledge of Montessori, the board adopts ideas that don't fit with the teachers' notions of what belongs in a Montessori school. Both teachers are upset that non-Montessori leaders are in control of their schools. When Trixie says that the board adopts "everything that came down the pike" her choice of words illuminates the meaning of the events that lead her to leave the school in search of a more stable Montessori homeplace. To travel "on the pike" is to travel on a highway or main road (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 2003). When she says

the board tries everything that comes down the pike, Trixie conjures an image of ideas barreling down the highways of American education and crashing into her classroom. Trixie and her friends have taken training, undergone transformation, and adopted a new way-of-being. Like Ruth, they want to live in the homestead they have chosen, but mainstream ideas about education come rolling down the pike and threaten to push aside their Montessori ideas.

Clifford and Friesen (2003b) express sympathy for teachers who feel defensive as they face reform efforts. They tell a story of a traveling man who trades all his wealth for a box full of coins stamped with the answers to all things. The man soon finds out, however, that answers have no value without the right questions. The traveler's coins, they say, are like the easy answers promised by school reformers:

Grasping for certainties in a time of huge social, economic, and political change, people also grasp at these new currencies with genuine hope that this time, in this place, things will be different... Everyone is looking for answers. In this concern to find solutions that will carry us into the future, however, we are in danger of moving into that future a bit like Marley's ghost, dragging mile upon mile of unresolved chains and incoherent shackles. (p. 90)

Trixie and Ruth want to avoid the dead weight of unresolved and incoherent school reforms introduced into their private Montessori school classrooms. While Clifford and Friesen find that "Hope lies in learning to ask new questions" (p. 91), Trixie and Ruth, have wholeheartedly accepted the questions asked by Montessori. They shape their teaching lives in response to questions about the natural tendencies and cosmic work of children. They ask themselves what they can do to help children grow in healthy ways in "this school, this classroom, this moment" (Jardine, 1998, p. 101). They are bothered by their private schools' reform efforts because they want to stay true not only to Montessori's answers, but also to her questions, which in turn, provoke their own

questions. Their homeplace is not an actual place; it is a situation, a way-of-being. As

Casey (1993) suggests, Montessori as home is not a physical place with a fixed position:

Houses are displaceable from their sites and subject to destruction, even to literal re-placement, but homes are ... not physical situations but situations for living.... This is why homes can be “somewhere in” places: deeply ensconced there, yet at no definite point or position. (Casey, 1993, p. 300)

For Trixie and Ruth, Montessori is not a particular school or classroom, it is “a situation for living.” When mainstream school reform ideas come barreling down the pike into their classrooms they leave a Montessori site, but they bring their sense of being at-home-in-Montessori with them when they journey into public schools where they can work with Montessori leaders. They also bring with them a wariness of mainstream reform efforts and non-Montessori leadership.

Encountering Strangeness, Finding Kinship

Conflict cannot be avoided ... and we are limited in our ability to empathize with each other’s passions. Moreover, feelings of isolation occur even in the most familiar community. But this notion of kinship: what a powerful image to ponder. (Paley, 1996, p. 131)

Anne’s first public school teaching position is in a system-wide Montessori school-of-choice, where she finds a group of parents who are enthusiastic and helpful. She experiences kinship with them because they share her attachment to Montessori ideas. But coming from years in small New England private schools to an inner city public school, she also experiences a sense of strangeness arising from her racial and cultural identity:

In that school I was one of two white people. It was a very strange situation coming from white Wellesley, Massachusetts and white Wilton, Connecticut.

She names the strangeness of her situation in terms of race, but doesn't explore what it means to be a white person (from Connecticut!) in an inner city school.

All six teachers I converse with are white, and all six teach in schools with a majority of minority students. Because Montessori classrooms are usually placed in public school systems in hopes of encouraging voluntary desegregation of schools, public Montessori schools often have diverse student populations. Yet, Anne's passing reference to being "one of two white people" is the only mention of race made in our conversations. Massey (2006), finds that the Montessori approach to teaching is congruent with tenets of Ladson-Billings' theory of a Culturally Relevant Pedagogy that is meant to be responsive to the racial and cultural identities of African Americans and other historically underserved students. Nevertheless, although the two white and two Sri Lankan Montessori teachers in her study touch on the notion of developing inter-cultural understanding in their classrooms, they do not mention "African American culture as being a culture that they are investigating or studying with the students" (p. 114). As I attend to the silences about race in our conversations, I wonder about ways our inattention to race shapes our willingness or ability to explore the workings of racial identity in our pedagogical experiences.

Levinas (1961/2000) tells us that which is invisible to us is still present in our relations: "Invisibility does not denote an absence of relation; it implies relations with what is not given, of which there is no idea" (p. 34). Singleton and Curtis (2006) find that throughout the U.S., race is a topic that tends to be suppressed, especially by white people: "Whites often don't speak their truth in regard to racial issues because they are afraid of making a misstep and having to defend what they say, their actions, or their

race” (p. 62). They believe white teachers in public schools frequently do not think about the meaning of race in the lives of their students, but the invisible or silenced presence of race is nevertheless powerful:

Staff members, for the most part, have not acquainted themselves with the experiences, perspectives, or understandings associated with being a person of color. Without “unpacking” race, White educators often attempt – whether intentionally or unintentionally – to make their colleagues of color as well as their students of color conform to the normalized conditions of White culture. (Singleton & Curtis, 2006, p. 95)

Villegas and Lucas (2002), too, believe that unacknowledged cultural norms shape the learning experiences of minority students:

As institutions of society, schools mirror the culture, language, and values of those in power. The ways of talking, interacting, thinking, and behaving of the dominant group are the unacknowledged norm in teaching evaluation practices. Therefore, schools place poor and minority children at a disadvantage in the learning process and systematically obstruct their development, whether intentionally or not. (p. xviii)

When my conversational partners and I fail to bring forth the workings of race in our classroom lives, what aspects of our relations with students and other educators remain hidden from our view? Gadamer (1960/2003) finds that every situation has limitations caused by horizons that determine what we see: “‘Situation’ ... represents a standpoint that limits the possibility of vision” (p. 302). What are the racial realities in the lives of our students my conversational partners and I fail to see because of the limited range of our own racial awareness? What dimensions of our own racial identities remain hidden to us, and what are the ways these hidden dimensions limit our understandings of who our students are and who they are becoming?

Anne's horizon expands in her first public school teaching position, and she becomes aware of race. But the strangeness of being one of two white people is overcome as she finds a place in a community of dedicated parents:

That was a good situation mainly because the parents were so dedicated and so devoted. Just whatever we felt was important for the class, that's what the parents were going for, working for.... That parent body wanted the assistant superintendent to get us our own building.

Anne gains a feeling of connection and kinship with parents who are devoted to the class, but in this school-within-a-school she and the parents come to a sense that the program would be better off in a building of their own. It is not the strangeness of racial difference that drives her away from this first school; like Trixie and Ruth, she leaves because of the strangeness of non-Montessori leadership. After conflicts with the traditional administrator and a confrontation with central office staff over the future of the Montessori program, she leaves this public Montessori school and teaches for a time in an inner-city traditional classroom. Here her sense of being an outsider is magnified:

I taught in a second grade over in a hellhole, which was really a bad scene. We were out on the playground one day and heard gunshots and everyone was told immediately, "Lie down!" And I'm like, "Lie down?" And they said, "Gunshots! Get down!" And I'm like, "I'm from Connecticut!"

The inner city school is at first foreign and frightening to Anne because it is dangerous. In the face of gunshots on the playground, the riskiness of the area, and a "really bad scene," she sees the school as a "hellhole." And in her wry reference to her Connecticut origins, she touches again upon the strangeness of being a white outsider. A sense of the significance of privilege, perhaps, begins to be recognized.

In spite of fear and her feeling of foreignness, though, Anne again finds herself at home in this school. She discovers she can teach here in "a Montessori way," and she finds kinship with another teacher in the school:

It was good! I mean, the teacher that I worked with, even though the area was really risky, ... was very Montessori, really! She had listening centers.... She also loved to do poetry.... Whenever there was an assembly she would let the principal know what poem we were working on, so our little kids would go up and say their poems.... They were adorable. They really were.... And I just handled it in a Montessori way.

In spite of her sense of being a stranger in “a really bad scene,” Anne enjoys her colleague and the children in her second grade classroom. This traditional, inner-city public school comes to feel like home to a white-haired, blue-eyed Montessori teacher from Connecticut.

Huebner (1999c) explores the complexity of adjusting to strangeness:

How can we face the threat of the unknown and the threat of the stranger outside of us and inside of us? It is not easy.... The presence and acknowledgement of the stranger in our life upsets the desired unity of thought, feeling, and action that we struggle to establish over time. Confronted by something new, forced to give up a part of our self, that unity is disrupted by new thoughts, new feelings, or new actions. (pp. 363-364)

Anne faces many unknowns in this school. She is a white outsider. She is afraid of gunshots. She is immersed in a non-Montessori environment. Nevertheless, she comes to peace with the situation and begins to feel part of the community of teachers as she finds ways to relate her way of being-with children to that of her colleagues. Huebner says that caring relationships provide assurance in the face of strangeness:

Trust, patience and conversation provided by one who cares or loves provides the time, support, and language necessary to bring discordant feelings, thoughts and actions into new unity. A relationship of love and care is a relationship of assurance – assurance that you will not be overcome by the stranger, and that you will still be loved even though you are no longer what you were but have taken on new life and new membership in the world. (Huebner, 1999c, p. 364)

Anne names her fellow teacher as “very Montessori, really!” because the teacher has listening centers and does poetry with the children. She is able to feel at home in an inner-city traditional elementary school because she develops a relationship of respect

with her colleague, and also because she comes to love her students. She feels acceptance of her values and vision, and she is able to handle her work with the children in what seems to her to be “a Montessori way.” She experiences assurance in the caring ways her colleague reaches out to her. She is able to “bring discordant feelings, thoughts and actions into new unity.” She experiences kinship in the face of otherness.

Anne’s mix of edginess, joy, and unexpected kinship is echoed by Trixie, who also teaches at a traditional public school for awhile before moving to a public Montessori school:

I was teaching ... in a multi-age program.... And I’m sure that the woman that I was teamed with was absolutely undone by me, but I ran my class as if it was a Montessori sort of class. The children were children. And the parents were parents. And there was a good mix from all economic walks of life and different education levels. And I loved my kids.

Although her relationships with parents and children make this school a comfortable homeplace for Trixie, she feels the strangeness of her situation when she tries to work with a colleague in the school who is rigidly attached to curriculum frameworks:

Every time I tried to join forces with her, like for instance it’s fall and the leaves are coming off the trees and I said, “Hey, let’s do leaves together,” she’d say, “Oh, No! That doesn’t come until spring.”

In spite of the strangeness of working with a colleague who attends to a curriculum framework rather than the interests of the children, Trixie finds herself at home in the school as she becomes close to her parents and students. In these caring relationships she finds assurance in a “new life and new membership in the world.” Like Anne, she brings her Montessori values and vision with her into a traditional classroom, and finds a home in spite of the strangeness she feels. She finds comfort and familiarity as she establishes relationships of care that provide the “support, and language necessary to bring discordant feelings, thoughts and actions into new unity.”

For Anne and Trixie, their pilgrimages into traditional public schools are marked by an initial sense of strangeness. Anne names her race and fear of gunshots as landmarks in the terrain of strangeness, and Trixie names her co-teacher's rigid attachment to a curriculum framework. Both women are Montessori teachers who enter a landscape shaped by traditional educational practices and find joy and comfort in the caring relationships they develop with colleagues, parents, and children. Yet, after a short time, they both move on to public Montessori schools. Their identity as Montessori teachers calls them to be in a community of Montessorians.

Drawn By a Call to Serve

I care and I'm willing to serve. Use me as Thou wilt to save Thy children today and tomorrow, and to build a nation and a world where no child is left behind, and every child is loved, and every child is safe. (Edelman, 2003, p. 21)

Edelman's naming of "a world where no child is left behind" has been appropriated by politicians who cut funding to schools at the same time they mandate heavy-handed yearly testing for all public school children. These words, now tainted by their association with the No Child Left Behind Act, the standards movement and high stakes testing, nevertheless resonate powerfully with the stories of coming-to-public schools told by Emma and Andrew. As Emma talks about entering public schools, she tells of being drawn to the idea of helping children who could not afford private school:

I was in a private school in the county but I felt really kind of drawn to try to help.... I was thinking about going into the Peace Corps and I got this lecture from this woman about why I would want to go around the world and help all these other children when there were children right here in America who I could help. And she was kind of right.

Emma, who has been called by Karma to make her life as a Montessori teacher, now feels drawn to help children in the public schools in her county. She wants to make a

difference. She is called to serve. Huebner (1999d) explores this aspect of a teaching vocation:

Living intentionally, that is, always in search of new integrating meanings and values, requires that we read the conflict between children's voices and the dominating noise of the powerful as a new question about emerging structures of justice and freedom.... To be teachers means re-shaping our values as we ourselves are being re-shaped by the newness of this changing world. (pp. 380-381)

Her experiences as a private school Montessori teacher have reshaped Emma, and she asks herself if it is enough to teach privileged children. Her desire to help opens up new landscapes of possibility for her. Although she does not name her new horizons in terms of race as Anne does, she does express a new awareness of the needs of children who are less privileged than those she teaches in private school.

Pigza (2005) explores a reciprocal relationship between vocation and education:

Vocation, ... from the Latin *vocare*, meaning "to call," ... evokes notions of "summoning with a shout" or "driving force."... *Educere* not only speaks to the calling forth of the best in our students, but also the best in ourselves.... Education as *educere* and vocation as *vocare* are both about presence, listening, and drawing forth.... Listening to the call of *vocare* unveils a freedom in letting our lives speak as they are inherently called to do so. (pp. 4-6)

Montessori teachers learn in training the importance of being present to children in ways that draw forth the children's inner strengths. The practice of being present has reshaped Emma's awareness of the world. She is aware of her own students, and now she is also aware of other children as well. She hears a call to serve. As she listens to the call of vocation, her response is twofold. She searches for ways to serve children who need help, and she also listens for what is right for her. She thinks about going into the Peace Corps, but her heart tells her the right thing to do is to help close to home, by teaching in Montessori public schools.

Andrew, like Emma, teaches in public schools because he feels called to serve. He leaves a public alternative high school to teach in a public Montessori charter school, and the fact that public schools are accessible to all students is important to him:

The reason I am in the public school is the free access to all. I see some of the kids that I serve, and I feel that if I wasn't doing that in the public school they wouldn't be getting Montessori.

Andrew is already committed to alternative forms of public education before he discovers Montessori. Teaching students expelled from regular high schools, he finds himself questioning what he calls “traditional educational . . . assessment tools, how do we know they're learning?” He finds that he values moments when he sees his high school students gravitate to a concept and make it their own, and the power of these moments changes his feelings about the nature of learning. He begins to feel hounded when his administrators ask him to focus on assessment of learning instead of the personal meaning-making responses of his students.

Dwelling in tension between the kind of learning experiences he values for his students and a fading allegiance to traditional educational practices, Andrew finds himself moving back and forth. He is called to teach in a different way. He is both drawn away from the rhetoric of the No Child Left Behind Act that measures education through test scores, and toward the original intent of Edelman's impassioned prayer. He cares, and he feels called to serve. Finally, he decides that Montessori offers the kind of education he wishes all students could have. Like Emma, he enters Montessori public schools to serve, but also because this way-of-being-with children feels right for him.

Both Andrew and Emma set out on a pilgrimage into public Montessori schools in response to a call to serve children as Montessori teachers. They do not feel called to raise standards or close an achievement gap. They are called to a kind of heart work that

supports children's explorations and brings forth natural strengths and passions. And as they answer a call to serve children, they also respond to an inner call for personal growth. Roderick (1991) finds in heart work possibilities for finding self-within-community: "Heart work enables us to open up to ourselves, to others, and to life possibilities in general" (p. 107). Godwin, too, explores the presence of self in community:

Love your neighbor as yourself rolls glibly off the tongue. We are trained from an early age to concentrate on the "neighbor" part with the not very surprising result that it may not occur to us until years later that the dictum rests on the premise that I *do* love myself... It's a willing giving over of yourself because you know you're part of a larger whole and are of specific and vital use to that whole. (2001, pp. 269-270)

Both Andrew and Emma heed a call to find inner growth through service to children. They are called to be "of specific and vital use" to the enthusiasms, interests, and natural developmental tendencies of children in public schools, and they are called to live in harmony with the urgings of their innermost selves, to let their lives speak "as they are inherently called to do so" (Pigza, 2005, p. 6).

Professing in a Liminal Space

Emma voices another reason for leaving private schools and entering public schools. She feels this move is right for her because she wants a larger arena than she has in the small private school where she started her career:

I needed something a little more professional than being a private school teacher. The benefits, the pay and the respect just aren't out there professionally, and the private school teacher is very insular. I kind of felt like a big fish in a little pond at that school. I could figure out any role I would be allowed to have there. I wanted some professional growth. I wanted a challenge.

She does not want an insular life. She wants a challenge, growth, something "a little more professional."

Professional, from the Latin *pro* meaning to move forth, out into a public position, and *fateri*, meaning to confess, own, or acknowledge (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 2003), seems an apt word to use in describing the move of all six teachers into public Montessori schools. These teachers, in moving into the public school domain, enter a broader arena than private schools provide. As they enter public schools, they move forth from a position on the periphery of educational traditions toward a more public position closer to the mainstream of educational ideas. They step across a doorsill, into a liminal space where things can happen and challenges can be embraced, a space where they cannot take for granted their Montessori perspectives. In this space they are in a public position and must confess, own and acknowledge their understandings of what education means, because administrators, parents, and other teachers may not understand the life they are trying to live with children.

Anne, Andrew, Trixie, Emma, Margaret and Ruth come to public school classrooms with their Montessori curriculum albums. They prepare environments full of work that might spark their students' imaginative musings. They present lessons, and observe and support their students' work of self creation. They find joy in bringing their pedagogical approach to children whose families might not be able to afford private schools. They come with a deeply personal and qualitative vision of accountability into a world that defines accountability in terms of impersonal standardization and quantification of outcomes. They enter a world where adults decide what children should learn, when they should learn it, and how their learning will be measured. They enter a space where the taken-for-granted is called into question, where experiences are felt strongly, must be thought about and sometimes, perhaps, can be played with.

Shadows on the Road

Teachers weigh up the work of boys and girls by a method that is just like that of measuring the material weight of lifeless objects with the mechanical aid of a balance. The work is “measured” like inanimate matter, not “judged” as a product of life. (Montessori, 1948/1994, p. 62)

Education is laboring under an image of “the basics” that ... involves ideas of breaking things down, fragmentation, isolation, and the consequent dispensing, manipulation, and control of the smallest, simplest, most meaningless bits and pieces of the living inheritances that are entrusted to teachers and learners in schools. (Jardine, Clifford, & Friesen, 2003, p. xiii)

Montessori and Jardine, Clifford and Friesen speak from different times and different places, but they voice a common theme: schools are sometimes places where adults break down and isolate knowledge and then attempt to measure children’s acquisition of the broken down and isolated bits and pieces. Learning in this paradigm is measured like inanimate matter. They also present an alternative vision. Jardine, Clifford and Friesen believe that schools can be places where adults offer an invitation to young people to think about who they are in the world, and how they come to be who they are:

Thinking the world together is ... an invitation to take up particular things with care and love and generosity, with an eye to how things belong somewhere and have come from somewhere – shared and contested spaces and voices and ancestries that define who we are in often mixed and contradictory ways. (Jardine, Clifford, & Friesen, 2003, p. xv)

Montessori, too, believes that providing opportunities for children to think about humankind’s ideals and ideas can alight the enthusiasms and interests of children and help them find a vision of who they are in the world:

Our aim is not only to make the child understand, and still less to force him to memorize, but so to touch his imagination as to enthuse him to his innermost core. We do not want complacent pupils, but eager ones. We seek to sow life in the child rather than theories, to help him in his growth, mental and emotional as well as physical, and for that we must offer grand and lofty ideas to the human mind. (Montessori, 1948/2003, p. 11)

When Montessori teachers enter public schools, they enter a space of tension between conflicting understandings of education. The standards movement that dominates public school pedagogy suggests that teachers and administrators ought to plan, measure, and plan again, in order to effectively insert standardized, measurable bits of knowledge into children's heads. This view of teaching is very different from the Montessorians' desire to touch the imagination of students, enthusing them to their "innermost core." State standards of learning and yearly state tests cast many shadows on the teaching lives of Emma, Ruth, Margaret, Anne, Trixie and Andrew, at times veiling their views of students' pathways and complicating their personal and qualitative sense of accountability to their students. In these shadows, it becomes difficult to follow the child, and the teachers experience frustration and a sense of fragmentation.

Shadows Cast by Calendars

Emma expresses a sense of having to lead children rather than following them. She says that the state tests influence her to steer children's learning in directions that seem contrary to their inherent drives:

In the public Montessori school classroom you feel like you're steering a lot. You don't really feel free to follow the child ... because you feel like you need to lead them down a road. And there's a destination, and we're all going to have to get there by "x" time. And that's the testing pressure.

The destination for Emma's journey with her students is the yearly state test. Between September and spring each year, all children must travel the same road and pick up the same skills and concepts required for success on the test. There may not be time for a student to pursue a personal interest or choose a personal challenge, because everyone in the class has to complete the state test journey by "x" time. Lessons to address the state standards and the Montessori curriculum are mapped out by the teacher in yearly,

quarterly, weekly and daily segments in order to ensure timely passage along this road. But, Emma is troubled because the journey along this testing road does not follow the pathways of her students' natural interests:

How do you follow the child down a road that they can't see, that they have no map for? The state curriculum is not necessarily something that's intrinsic. I don't think they wake up in the morning thinking, "I'm going to construct myself to master the [state curriculum]. In fifth grade I'll learn about circles, but in fourth grade we don't learn about circles."

As Emma questions the state curriculum she holds it up to the light of the Montessori ideal, "Follow the child." In her Montessorian's way of understanding the meaning of teaching, she feels she ought to stay focused on her students' interests, and attentive to signs that they are making connections to their world. Van Manen (1991), too, believes teachers can help children learn only when they are attentive to the focus that children bring to bare on something when they become interested:

Interest is not a state of mind that can be requisitioned or produced upon request.... To be interested in something is to stand in the midst (*interesse*) of something.... As I focus on a subject of interest, my focus allows me to concentrate and to be attentive. Thus, in being intensely with something or somebody I gain an awareness of the possibilities, the indefinability, the openness of the subject. A subject that interests me is a subject that matters to me. (p. 196)

Emma wonders what her students wake up in the morning thinking about. She wants to base her instructions on the things that hold her students' attention, things that open up possibilities for them. She does not object to the idea that children should learn about circles. In fact, she finds that setting goals and rising to challenges has value for the children:

I think the one advantage of the test-driven curriculum is it gives them a tangible goal. "These are the things that I need to know." And I've always had a hard time, especially in areas like math, following the child.... I think that in rising to some challenges they got comfortable with working harder, or working better.

What bothers Emma about the state curriculum is not that it sets standards and goals that challenge children. She is bothered by time constraints. The standards are tied to an inflexible timetable: “In fourth grade we don’t learn about circles,” and, “There’s a destination, and we’re all going to have to get there by ‘x’ time.” What bothers Emma is not the destination, but the fact that she must steer children toward it by “x” time. Jardine, Clifford, and Friesen (2003) find that when teachers focus on learning as a process of passing on isolated bits of information, they begin to feel trapped in a cycle of “striving to keep up:”

Teachers and children are thereby condemned to constantly striving to “keep up.”... As the pieces become broken down more and more, the only hope of at least *attempting* to keep up is *acceleration*. Talk of slowing things down, dwelling over something and deepening our experience of it begins to sound vaguely quaint, antiquated, and simply unrealistic. (pp. 11-12)

Planning lessons so she meets the state timeline for teaching each part of each subject forces Emma to focus on her own work and the segmented details of the subject-matter she is teaching, rather than on the work of the children. Teacher, student and subject live in an uncomfortable tension created by the imperatives of test-time.

Aoki (2005i) explores the realities of life in classrooms, where distinctions between child-centered, teacher-centered or subject-centered pedagogy tend to blur:

Life in the classroom is not so much *in* the child, *in* the teacher, *in* the subject; life is lived in the spaces between and among. What we ought to do, then, is to slip out of the language of curriculum centers.... A voice that grows in the middle is the sound of play in the midst of things – a playful singing in the midst of life. (pp. 281-282)

There is definitely room in Emma’s teaching-life for subject-centered planning, teacher-centered planning and child-centered planning. She lives comfortably in the space “between and among.” Her training prepares her for all three approaches. Her Montessori

curriculum albums are packed with science, history, math and language lessons, each with both developmental and academic aims. Montessori (1948/2003) tells elementary teachers to feed the hungry intelligence of elementary children by “opening vast fields of knowledge to eager exploration” (p. 4):

If the idea of the universe be presented to the child in the right way, it will do more for him than just arouse his interest.... The stars, earth, stones, life of all kinds form a whole in relation with each other.... A greater curiosity arises, which can never be satiated; so will last through a lifetime ..., and he begins to ask: What am I? What is the task of man in this wonderful universe? Do we merely live here for ourselves, or is there something more for us to do? (p. 6)

There is a profound difference, though, between Montessori’s vast fields of knowledge that provoke questioning and curiosity, and mandated grade-level standards that articulate yearly outcomes. From Emma’s perspective as a Montessori teacher, curricular goals should be visible to the children; curriculum should provide vision. The children should be able to see the road before them, and the road they see should invite them to understand who they are in the universe. Child-centered and subject-centered pedagogy are not at odds in this view of teaching, but steering children down a road they cannot see, on a timetable established by adults, is problematic. In the words of van Manen (1991), “As I interact with the students I must maintain an authentic presence and personal relationship for them.... Life in the classrooms is contingent, every moment is situation-specific” (p. 112).

Emma works in a school district where mandated testing occurs many times a year. Because she has three grade levels being tested, her attention to the children’s interests and abilities is frequently interrupted by externally mandated assessment. She feels as though she is constantly cramming information into the children, rather than conversing with them about what matters in life:

I think I administer about 15 tests a year to these children. I'm always grasping, grasping, grasping. Trying to grab, you know, "Let me grab you, and just for a few minutes cram down your throat how to add and subtract fractions of unlike denominators. I know you're not ready for that, but it doesn't matter because you're going to learn it right now!" ... There's a push, push, push.

The pressures of curriculum calendars cast shadows on Emma's teaching journey with her students, making it hard for her to "maintain an authentic presence and personal relationship." Whether or not her students are interested, she feels she ought to sit them down and cram a little information into their brains before the next test.

Ruth, too, feels pulled away from Montessori teaching practices by requirements to teach the knowledge-base assessed by the state test. She finds it hard to focus on the children's joy in learning when she teaches to the test:

The biggest draw away from Montessori is the [state] testing. It does NOT follow the Montessori curriculum and it is so picayune! We're not talking about big pictures anymore, we're talking ... being able to articulate the information that you know in such a precise way that it makes it nearly impossible to have that slow, even, "I want to enjoy school and isn't this curious and interesting!"

Like Emma, Ruth is troubled by what she calls the picayune quality of the state standards. Picayune, from the French word *picailon* carries the sense of worthless coins that jingle in the pocket (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 2003). She feels that the little bits of broken-down knowledge she must teach her students are coins of no value, and she is bothered that the state requires her young students to produce what they learn in a precise and particular way. She wants a slow, even rhythm so she can help children understand "the big picture." Like Jardine, Clifford and Friesen (2003), she wants her students to be able to slow things down, dwell over them and deepen their experiences. She wants her six to nine year old students to enjoy school and relish the curious and interesting things they discover in their explorations. For Ruth, the shadows cast by state tests make her

feel she must rush the children through their journey together so that they will learn how to produce picayune bits of information in a precise and seemingly worthless way.

Margaret, too, talks about shadows cast by curriculum calendars. She is bothered by yearly assessments of progress, and wishes her lower elementary students could have time to mature without being judged:

If we could have the three year work cycle, let it work.... How do we do that with the [state test]?... The three year cycle gives our children the freedom to breathe and when you have these sound-byte yearly requirements on the part of the academic leaders, ... it seems like there's no room for that freedom to allow the child to mature at their own level of development without somebody making a judgment about how they're not doing well.

Margaret works at a school-within-a-school. The academic leaders are non-Montessorians who urge teachers to push children to reach yearly goals. She is bothered by their “sound-byte yearly requirements,” because she feels that children need a three year cycle of development that gives them “freedom to breathe.” Brown (2003) offers a poetic image that resonates with Margaret’s wish that her students might have the gift of time:

Too many logs
packed in too tight
can douse the flames
almost as surely
as a pail of water would....

A fire
grows
simply because the space is there,
with openings
in which the flame
that knows just how it wants to burn
can find its way. (p. 89)

Margaret, who values watching and waiting, rather than jumping in quickly trying to fix things, sees that her students need time to mature without people judging them. She

knows the value of time from her own life experiences. She watched her little son's journey-of-becoming in his Montessori classroom, and she spent years studying and talking with other teachers about philosophy before she committed herself to taking Montessori training. She understands teaching as a project that requires time and patience. Time is the space between the logs that allows the flames of interest and enthusiasm to grow.

Van Manen (1991) finds that many trends in education work against a teacher's ability to support students' inner growth:

Curriculum policy that is predominantly concerned with measurable learning outcomes, teachers who feel compelled to teach toward the exam, schools whose policies do not help kids experience a sense of community – these all tend to lose sight of the fact that all education is ultimately education of the whole person. Many teachers intuitively understand that for all students their education is a life project. Each ... accomplishment must make sense in terms of this larger life-project of the young person. (p. 166)

Margaret wants to keep her focus on education as a life project, where each child's accomplishments make sense in the context of that child's life. She wants her students to have the kind of lived time experience Roderick (1991) finds in detours from main roads:

As one leaves the main road to take a detour of one's own or another's choosing, clock time can give way to *kairos* or the experiencing of unmeasured time and metered space steps aside for uncharged openness. We can be, we can be experiencing, we can inhale the beauty before us without counting miles and minutes. (p. 105)

Margaret finds that when she is forced to make externally mandated judgments about how well her students are progressing through the state curriculum, she loses something of her ability to support her students. Externally mandated assessments, by focusing her attention on measurable progress over increments of time, threaten to move her focus away from education as a life-project that takes unmeasured time for each child

to accomplish. Worse, the tests, with the judgments they imply, make her feel pressured to pack in too much teacher-directed work, and this “can douse the flames/almost as surely/as a pail of water would.”

Shadows of Threats to the Children’s Well-Being

Andrew’s concerns about the state tests echo those of Emma, Ruth and Margaret. He is bothered that the tests rush his journey with the students, and take away from their time to grasp real-life experiences; and he resists the notion of rating students’ progress on the basis of their grade level:

That test being there with the Montessori philosophy bothers me. That test rates kids on a grade level, which I think is very different from the way Montessori looks at it.... The pressure, I feel, is a distraction. Less time grasping experiences, the real life things. I do feel that pressure of this two-dimensional test.... It’s a balancing act. And I’m constantly weighing their well-being to what they need to know for that test.

Andrew puts into words the sub-text of Emma, Ruth and Margaret’s tension. They all are concerned about the well-being of their students, weighing this concern against what they know the students need to learn for “that test.” Andrew says that the test not only steals time from the children, it is a distracting presence because it is two-dimensional. It has only length and width; it has no breadth, no depth. It rates children on a grade level. It attempts to convert their development as human beings into numbers that cannot provide a three-dimensional understanding of who the children are, what their lives are like, what they care about and are interested in learning. Andrew is forced into a balancing act in order to safe-guard the children’s well-being. He cannot forget what they need to know for the test, but he also does not want to forget what is needed for their well-being.

Emma, too, expresses her concern for her students’ well-being as she talks about students who are hurt by the testing pressure:

There are a few children who just can't take it. They melt down.... There are some kids who just are not ready for these particular skills. And here's the dig, this is really the dig. If you're grouping them according to testing groups, and you're pulling all your fourth graders, ... there are fourth graders in that group who can't cut it. So essentially now, they are sitting in a group trying, really trying, and I'm trying to teach, and they're keenly aware of the fact that everybody knows and they don't.

Grouping children by grade level runs counter to Emma's appreciation of the many ways a Montessori classroom can nurture children's confidence in their abilities. In Montessori classrooms that don't face the pressure of state tests, almost all lessons are presented to groups of two or three children. Lillard (2005) describes instructional grouping in Elementary Montessori classrooms:

In Elementary classrooms children are rarely seen working alone. They pursue knowledge in self-formed groups. Asked what happens in these small learning groups when one child understands better than the others – a concern that arises out of the individualistic traditional model in which one child might do most of the work – I recently heard a 9-year old Montessori child respond, “We help each other.” (p. 32)

Without the pressure of the state tests, Emma would observe the interests and skills of the children and plan lessons for students who share similar interests or enjoy working together. She would prepare activities for student exploration and encourage students to help each other learn from their explorations. Sometimes she might create a group of children at a similar skill level for instruction in math or reading, but she would not form a group based solely on their age:

It's not designed for, “Everybody else is ready for this and I have to teach it because I have to move on next week, so you have to come and get it now.” It's not designed for that.

Montessori teachers do not plan lessons in order to move children through a curriculum; they plan lessons that will guide and assist children as they undertake the monumental task of creating themselves. In planning for lessons, the teacher attends to the

developmental needs of the individual child. Van Manen (1991) calls this kind of attentive teaching pedagogical tact:

Tact discerns what is unique and different about a child and attempts to enhance this uniqueness. In contrast, a tactless teacher ... treats all children the same way.... Pedagogical tact knows how to discern and evaluate uniqueness. Pedagogical tact aims to enhance the difference that “difference” makes in a child’s personal growth and development. (p. 169)

Emma wants her students to leave her lessons with a sense that they have learned something important, and she feels the children’s pain when they are unable to master skills on a standardized timetable aligned with quarterly benchmark testing:

A Montessori class is ... designed so that they always get the skills they’re ready for. And, “Look at how great I am! She taught me that and I got it! Wow, I’m really smart!” ... They’re keenly aware of who knows and who doesn’t know. And it’s painful. It’s painful for some kids.... I really hate it. Oh, it’s awful!... And the kids know as they get older, they know what they don’t know and it hurts their confidence.

For Andrew and Emma, the shadows of the tests threaten the well-being of their students. The powerful presence of the testing timetable distracts their pedagogical attention away from real, three-dimensional needs of individual children. The tests, and test-data, are two dimensional. They are flat. They have no real substance, yet they cast dark shadows that obscure the shared pathways of teachers and students.

Berman (1991) expresses a vision of what school can be that resonates with Andrew’s idea that there is more to his students than the two-dimensional test can measure or describe:

Our students are wandering sojourners. Schools can be dwellings where their beings are restored and regenerated. In the process students may come to know more fully the meaning of being....

For starters we feel we might ...

Search to understand more fully the multiple facets of the person,
Spend less time thinking about intellect as distinct from being,

Show in diverse ways that one cares,
 Be less concerned about abstract and unexamined rules,
 Give less attention to response and end evaluations lacking in specifics,
 Give more attention to responsiveness within the meanings of the person,
 Give more time to reflect on self and others as being,
 Be less concerned about persons as only linear knowers. (p. 189)

When Berman writes about her vision for schools in 1991, she envisions places where people know and support each other as complex and situated beings. Between 1991 and 2006, when Andrew, Emma and Margaret talk about what bothers them about the state tests, schools moved in a very different direction from Berman's vision. During the 1990's, with escalating urgency, a coalition of business interests pushed through an agenda of standards and accountability that now dominates conversations about teaching and learning in public schools (Tulenko, 2002). Andrew's wish that children might have time to grasp real life experiences, and his concern for the well-being of his students, is a quiet wish in a small corner of public education, overshadowed by the strident demands of the standards movement.

Voices from the Shadows

For Emma, Ruth and Margaret, the tests cast shadows in the shapes of time constraints. The tests also cast shifting shadows that threaten the well-being of their students by distracting teachers' attentions away from the needs of individual students. Margaret tells about another dimension of the shadows described by Ruth, Andrew, Emma and Trixie. She is troubled by noisy voices from these shadows that urge her to veer away from the Montessori path she wants to travel.

In Margaret's second year in public school, the school she worked in failed by one tenth of a percent to meet standards established by the No Child Left Behind

legislation. The next year, she was approached by other Montessori teachers in the school, who urged her to drill students in order to prepare them for the state tests:

I was really read the riot act this year because I had some kids who had a very hard time with their [state test] last year. “You need to get with it. These scores have got to come up.”... I was told by certain faculty this year, “You just have to drill them, because they’ve got to know how to take this test.” I heard it from a couple of Montessorians: “They have to do it. They have to produce.”

Margaret, like Ruth, is troubled by pressure to drill her students so they will “produce” on the test, and she is distressed especially when that pressure comes from Montessori colleagues. Margaret’s appreciation of Montessori has deep roots that grew over time, and she is really troubled by the willingness of her fellow Montessorians to drill students for the state tests. She wants to stay close to the Montessori approach:

I’ve been trained in Reading First, now Words Their Way. I’ve been looking at the PALS scores versus the DRA scores, versus the DRP scores.... How do they all fit together?... All these different languages are coming at us.... I’m bothered by it actually this year. I’m thinking, am I getting further and further away from Montessori?

Shadows of tests fall between Margaret and other Montessori teachers. She hears their voices joining others who call her to move away from the Montessori way-of-being she values, and to adopt other instructional strategies and measures of achievement. She questions what the tests can tell her, and looks for ways to articulate her questions:

What happens on the [state tests] after they’ve taken all those tests, and what does it really say? So I’ve been looking at that, actually charting how we can more strongly or more appropriately articulate what we’re trying to do as Montessorians.

Margaret is relatively new to public schools, and she is trying to understand how the Montessori curriculum works with state requirements, and how she can articulate her understandings to the non-Montessorians who lead the program. As she struggles with these questions, she uses language that evokes her Montessori *ethos*:

It takes awhile to figure out what all the ... requirements are and what the threads are, and how they can be interwoven together. I would like to keep working on that. And for me, what centers me and what guides me is I really believe that Montessorians have a framework, and the Great Lessons actually help us, center us.

She talks of being centered, of finding ways to weave threads into a framework. These words evoke images of contemplative pilgrimage, an inner pilgrimage of the spirit.

Margaret does not use the technical language of standards and assessment to describe her struggles. She is not thinking about curriculum alignment; she wants to find ways to interweave strands. She does not want to adopt the language of standards and assessments; she wants to use the required language in her own way:

If I could help bring all that [state] material ... to an integrated process that we would be doing anyway, weaving and guiding and interrelating based on that, then I'll do a better job.... of using the language they want us to use, but in our own way.

As Margaret wrestles with the test requirements, she tries to stay true to the *ethos* and language of her Montessori homeplace. The most stressful pressure for her comes from a fear that her own Montessori colleagues might be trying to call her away from the Montessori way-of-being. She tells a story of talking with a Montessori colleague who directed her away from Montessori ideas:

She was saying ... SRA will get our kids to [the state tests] better than maybe some of these other programs. But see, there's SRA, then there's Words Their Way, ... and now next year Lucy Calkins.... How do they all fit together? That's the question.... All these different languages are coming at us.... I need to study that and see how that fits into our philosophy rather than saying, "Okay, I'm going to go to that and leave my philosophy behind."

Margaret is troubled by the many languages spoken. SRA, Words Their Way, DRP, DRA, PALS and Lucy Calkins create a cacophony of voices that threatens to drown out her attunement to the language of Montessori pedagogy. She spent many years

thinking and questioning educational philosophies before she took Montessori training. She waited, watched and thought long and hard before she took training. Now she is feeling fragmented by all the voices, and it bothers her:

I'm bothered by it actually this year. I'm thinking, am I getting further and further away from Montessori? I'm bothered by it. Because I feel like I'm trying to stay centered on this sand bar that is in some ways slipping away, going out to the ocean. But I feel like it's possible to stay strong. So I'm seeking a language to stay strong.

Public school Montessori teachers live in a world shadowed by conflicting images and confused by cacophonous voices. Aoki (2005d), too, hears conflicting voices in the world of education:

In our busy world of education, we are surrounded by layers of voices, some loud and some shrill, that claim to know what teaching is. Awed, perhaps, by the cacophony of voices, certain voices become silent and, hesitating to reveal themselves, conceal themselves. Let us beckon these voices to speak to us, particularly the silent ones, so that we may awaken to the truer sense of teaching that likely stirs within each of us. (p. 188)

The sense of teaching Montessori teachers bring to public school classrooms speaks to ideals of guiding, supporting, nurturing and empowering. The images transmitted daily to public school Montessori teachers by the traditional educational culture that surrounds them is quite different. Teachers in traditional images of teaching diagnose deficiencies, prescribe instructional remedies, manage behavior and monitor achievement. What are the ways Montessori teachers might call forth in conversation the hesitant inner voices of other educators who perhaps hold, concealed in their hearts, similar notions of what teaching might be?

Hooks (2003) urges caring educators to “find and enter the open spaces in closed systems” (p. 74). By teaching in public school classrooms, Montessorians are entering open spaces in closed systems. When they resist images of teaching as accounting and

controlling, they are challenging the notion that these educational paradigms cannot be changed. What does it take to find firm footing in the midst of these shadowy open spaces? How can teachers find the stillness of a silence that allows a teacher to listen for the voices of children in the midst of the noise of too many other voices, and too many different calls for reform? What are the possibilities for beckoning the quiet voices of Montessorians and other like-minded teachers into the mainstream of education?

Resisting the Shadows

As Margaret searches for the language to help her stay strong in the face of too many voices, she is frustrated by Montessori teachers telling her to teach to the test, and she finds herself impatiently resisting:

If children aren't quite ready, obviously you're not just going to sit around and not guide the children and give them ways in which you can help them succeed.... I'm really resisting that conversation. Someone actually told me, "We all want to be Montessorians, but we have to meet the state standards."

While Margaret resists, Ruth feels stretched almost past the point of being able to resist, not only by the state tests, but also by the vastness of the Montessori curriculum with the state curriculum add-ons:

Here in this school ... I feel extremely stretched.... A lot of it is because of the testing.... There's just too much for one person to do and do it right.

The stretching Ruth feels tends to draw her away from her Montessori training; she is inclined to fall back on the kind of traditional teaching she did for so many years before she took training. In private school she felt secure with the slow, even, Montessori approach: "We were laying the foundation and it takes longer for us to lay that foundation than to just have them regurgitate the information." At her public charter

school, though, she feels pressure both from the state curriculum and from parents who want their children to do well on state tests:

The state standards are there, ... the parents want to see that on paper, and my big thing now is, I'm going to teach their curriculum, but I want to do it in a Montessori way.

Lillard (2005) finds that even in private schools Montessorians feel the pull of traditional patterns of teaching:

It is hard for people to abandon culturally transmitted ideas about children and schooling, and Montessori teachers often adopt traditional school practices because those practices feel familiar (to parents and to themselves) and seem, on the surface, to work. (p. 329)

In spite of parents wanting to see results “on paper,” and the attractive familiarity of traditional teacher-controlled classroom routines, though, Ruth wants to continue to teach “in a Montessori way.” She is torn between her love of the Montessori method and her sense that she can also teach children well in a more traditional way, and the more traditional way of teaching makes an easier match with state testing. As she reflects on her dilemma, she tells how she explains traditional teaching to her students:

The teacher sits at the front and you guys all are at the back, and you listen to what I have to say, and you kind of understand it. You can ask questions, and then you're going to practice doing what I just said. That's the way.

Ruth knows she can do a good job of teaching to the test in a traditional way, but doing so makes her feel physically and emotionally uncomfortable:

It makes me feel awful. I don't like it. I don't like it at all. There's a part of me that says, if I have to be accountable to this test, then I have to teach to the test. And I don't like that.

There is something within Ruth that resists being accountable to “this test.” She fell in love with Montessori when she took training. She has been fundamentally transformed as a teacher. Her basic orientation is now one of attending to the individual needs of her

students. She does not fall back comfortably on the familiar, traditional teaching practices where “the teacher sits at the front” and the children are “at the back.” She wants to place the needs of the children at the front, not the teacher-controlled curriculum. She does not experience the tension between planned curriculum and lived curriculum as Aoki’s (2005h) indwelling between curriculum worlds. He suggests creative tension “allows good thoughts and actions to arise when properly tensioned chords are struck” (p. 162). The tension Ruth experiences, though, causes her pain, not good thoughts and actions. It makes her feel awful.

Anne and Trixie, the most experienced of the teachers, also talk about the shadow of the tests, although they say the tests don’t bother them. For Anne, it seems dangerous to even “give it a second thought.” She introduces test-taking strategies and state-mandated grade-level objectives, but keeps her concentration focused firmly on the developmental sensitivities of her students:

I feel what the public school is doing with the testing is so destructive to the child.... If you let that bother you, if you even give it a second thought, you’re really destroying your own capability to concentrate.... It’s not that I don’t do the things with the kids, it’s just, if they get it, okay, if they don’t, it’s inappropriate. Because we’re following the children.

Anne laughs about a mismatch between Montessori classrooms and what her school system calls Data Utilization. She laughs at the irony of trying to capture the multiple realities of classroom life on three pages of questions that bear no relevance to her classroom life:

I really love my Data U sheet!... There’s three pages of stuff that you’re supposed to fill out that have no relevance. And even what I put down really didn’t answer the questions they asked.... So I just really don’t even care, I must say. I don’t care about the testing.

The Data Utilization forms ask two-dimensional questions about quantifiable data. As she engages with students in her classroom, Anne asks very different questions. She presents ideas and activities to her students and her concentration is complicated and multi-faceted as she watches to see what they do with those ideas and activities. Her observations of students' engagement with their work guide her as she thinks about what to do next. The data sheets she is asked to fill out require her to place numerical values on complex pedagogical interactions. The questions the data sheets ask have no relevance to her. The data utilization sheets ask questions like: "How many students are on grade level in math? What percentage of students are emergent readers?" Montessori teachers watch students work and ask themselves if the work is meaningful to the children. In planning, they ask questions like, "What story will help a group of six year olds think about what it means to be kind to each other?" The two ways of questioning and thinking about classroom life are inherently contradictory.

Ellsworth (1997) talks about contradictions that are always inherent when teachers assess student learning:

The bottom line for assessment purposes is for a student to get it, comprehend it be "conscious" of it; even if she didn't want to get it, didn't enjoy getting it, or does not intend to use it. (p. 46)

Anne is very interested in thinking about whether or not her students "get it," but if they don't get it, she feels what she is offering is inappropriate. She is feeding the hungry intelligence of her students. Her goal is to strike their imaginations, and to nourish a curiosity, "which can never be satiated; so will last through a lifetime" (Montessori, 1948/2003, p. 6). She may laugh off the incongruity of some of the paperwork, but she actively resists anything that directly affects her students:

I don't care what else is happening in the school, as long as my kids and my classroom are not affected. However, if they start to bend the philosophy or change the philosophy, then I get active.

Parker (1998) finds creative tension in such resistance to organizational imperatives:

We inhabit institutional settings ... because they harbor opportunities that we value. But the claims those institutions make on us are sometimes at odds with our hearts.... That tension can be creative, up to a point.... One finds solid ground on which to stand outside the institution – the ground of one's own being – and from that ground is better able to resist the deformations that occur when organizational values become the landscape of one's inner life. (pp. 167-168)

Anne resists organizational imperatives if they affect her classroom. Trixie's resistance is somewhat different. She feels that her own internal standards exert more pressure on her than tests: "I hold myself to very high standards and so this is my accountability to myself, it's not an accountability to somebody else." She is very aware of state standards and tests, but says they don't change how she teaches:

There are very few things that aren't in our curriculum that are in theirs. Yes, indeed, you may be teaching something at a time when you ordinarily wouldn't, but for the most part ... I come up with ways to handle that so that they don't really interfere with what I want to do.

Neither Trixie nor Anne ignores the tests, and neither teacher actively resists as long as they can keep the effects at arm's length. They hold themselves and their students to a high standard, but their attention is on children's inner development, and they refuse to be pulled away from that focus by either administrators or parents. Trixie, however, feels certain she would have less freedom if her students did not do well on tests:

I think that fortunately when the administration walked in the room to do their observation if you appeared to know what you were doing and if the children were engaged during lessons, then they were happy. And also I do think that our children test fairly well and so that also keeps the administration happy. I think if those two things weren't happening that we would have seen a lot more of that interfering coming around.

Ruth, Emma, Anne, Andrew, Trixie and Margaret all left traditional education behind and settled happily into the Montessori homestead they chose when they took training. Now in public schools they are asked to measure children's work in the traditional ways they chose to leave behind. They are asked to "weigh up the work like inanimate matter," and to teach not "care and love and generosity," but disconnected bits and pieces of information, isolated from "shared and contested spaces and voices and ancestries." The pathways of teaching marked by standards and testing are not completely foreign to these Montessorians; they grew up in schools that took testing and grading learning for granted. But the pathways of standards and testing move through pedagogical terrains they consciously left behind when they set out to become Montessori teachers. The teachers are on familiar roads made unfamiliar by their own transformative inner pilgrimages. They understand traditional teaching in the way that a long-time traveler might have a mental map of the streets of a childhood hometown.

However, the teachers' students cannot see where the roads of standardized learning lead because they have no inner map of the terrain. There is no intrinsic drive that calls young people to master circles in the fifth grade, but not in the fourth grade. In the shadowy territory of Montessori public schools, Montessori teachers sometimes stumble. At times they lose sight of their Montessori *ethos* and feel compelled to grab children from their work, and ask them for just a few minutes of their time so they can cram some skills or information into their brains. In their hearts, the teachers want to show children the big picture, help them enjoy school and lead them to discover the curious and interesting things the world has to offer. However, they also feel responsible for making sure that students master information they need to "produce" on state tests.

These six teachers have been drawn-in to being Montessori teachers. They value a way-of-life that measures success through observation of joy and concentration; but now, in public Montessori schools, they must rate children using a two-dimensional test. They feel displaced from the homestead they adopted when they took their training. Often they feel oppressed by the power of shadows that surround them and voices that call to them from those shadows. Sometimes they struggle as they try to stay strong, and sometimes they actively resist. Other times they laugh at incongruities, shrug them off, and keep their focus on children's self-constructing work. The teachers hold themselves and their students to high standards, though those standards are not easily translated into the language of state standards and testing. Unsettled by the testing shadows that fall between them and their students, they set out on a new kind of pilgrimage. They set out to negotiate the difficult territory that leads through a liminal space where standards and testing shadow their Montessori understandings. What is it like for them to journey on pathways in the midst of shadows? What markers do they find to help them negotiate in the uneasy terrain of public schools?

Negotiating Montessori Public School Pathways

The fibers of culture and nature compose one continuous fabric. Interwoven thus, these fibers are inseparable in experience even if they are distinguishable upon analysis and reflection.... In the cosmic tapestry, discrete threads may be discernible on close scrutiny, but the overall pattern presents itself as a single Gestalt. The pattern emerges from the ongoing intimacy between the warp of culture and the woof of nature. (Casey, 1993, p. 256)

Casey's description of ways that culture and nature interweave in our consciousness as we view landscapes serves well as a metaphor for the experience of public school Montessori teachers. Emma, Andrew, Anne, Ruth, Margaret and Trixie want their students to grow in ways natural to their inner developmental tendencies, and

they also want them to have life skills appropriate to 21st century citizens of the United States. They hope their students will learn how to be kind to each other, how to take up a project and complete it, and the many ways that they are smart and capable. The teachers' day-to-day lesson-planning, even without state standards and tests, is complex, layered, intricate, and fluid. They never know for sure what lesson will catch the interest of any particular child on any given day. They start each day prepared to present certain lessons, but hold themselves in creative tension, making decisions from moment to moment about whether the time is right for this lesson with this child. They are called to balance their vision of where the children are going with what they can observe of the children's inner visions.

It takes years of experience to learn to weave the many threads of the Montessori philosophy and curriculum into a supportive fabric that stretches over a three year cycle, yet gently and persistently supports the growth of children in "this school, this classroom, this moment with this child" (Jardine, 1998, p. 101). Learning to weave the strands of classroom life into a fabric that gives children freedom to breathe, and also motivation to pursue their interests with passionate and joyous concentration leads Montessori teachers on a kind of inner pilgrimage. Like a weaver who begins by threading (warping) a loom, Montessori teachers prepare for classroom life by arranging environments, setting up activities and planning lessons.

Thread derives from the Old English *thráwan*, meaning to turn or to twist, to bend or to throw away. Warp comes from the Old English *weorpan*, meaning to cast, as in casting a net (*American Heritage Dictionary*, 2000). Fishermen cast nets, weavers warp looms, teachers set up classrooms and plan lessons. In each act, a structure (nets,

threads, classrooms, lessons), is readied for use in an uncertain future. The fisherwoman cannot know what fish will swim into her net when she sets it. The weaver's creative art is yet to be revealed as he warps his loom. The teacher cannot predict which child's enthusiasms will be sparked by her lessons and the activities she has prepared, or where those enthusiasms will take both children and teacher.

Reynolds (2002) writes about weaving as an art born of patient repetition:

Within the patience, within the loom-space, within the weaving is a rhythm of time, a rhythm of space and a certain soul-rhythm that is known to the weaver.... The rhythm of doing sets out for the weaver a space and a place ... where the mind and the body are joined as one with the weaving, the creation of something born out of the weaver and loom. (p. 18)

The creative act of teaching begins in patiently threading the loom of classroom life with routines, lessons and activities, but as suggested by thread's root word *thráwan*, the patterns of the teacher's weaving appear on the threads of classroom life as she turns and twists to catch a glimpse of the children's inner visions, and then bends and reshapes her plans to weave those visions into the warp of classroom life. Within the complex realities of their classrooms, crowded with childhood personalities and passions, public school Montessori teachers must also weave school system requirements for streamlining, standardization and testing into their teaching lives in ways that make it possible for the young people in their care to thrive. They do not want the warp of classroom life to warp the children's growth. They want the threads of their planning to support the self-creating drive of children as their beings unfold. These Montessori public school teachers weave their way through their days with children, searching for threads that will bring them safely through shadowy pathways on uneasy inner pilgrimages. As they weave, they seek ways to stay flexible so they can turn, twist and bend to travel the pathways of students'

visions and interests. The pattern of classroom life emerges from the shadows as teachers weave the warp of their plans with the woof of children's natures.

Uncertain Pathways on an Inner Pilgrimage

The thinned-out “super” highway ... is a fable of the progressive denudation of a primal wilderness.... Basic traits of what was at least partially wild to begin with were progressively eliminated until the landscape itself became, if not lifeless, *featureless*.... There is indeed no preestablished harmony between culture and nature, so that the equilibrium of these two factors is everywhere precarious and all too easily disrupted. (Casey, 1993, p. 258)

I return to Casey's description of the relationships between culture and nature in our perceptions of landscape. Here he explores travel on a super highway and how it effects the traveler. The super highway is like the pike Trixie describes in Chapter Four, when she talks about non-Montessori administration adopting everything that comes down the pike. On the super highways of public school education, school systems' strategic plans come barreling down the pike and crash into Montessori classroom life, threatening to denude the beautiful patterns woven of teachers' plans and children's inner visions.

Emma describes her experiences in simple terms, weighted with meaning: “We have to keep talking and we have to keep negotiating what Montessori is.” The word negotiation has a long history that resonates with the experience of being a Montessori teacher in public school. The word has roots in two Latin words: *negre* meaning to deny or refuse; and *tium* meaning leisure, freedom from business, ease, and peace. In 15th century French, Italian and Portuguese, the word came to mean “to do business,” and “to discuss in order to reach an agreement,” but in its Latin root words, negotiation carries a sense of edgy refusal of leisure, ease and peace (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 2003). On their inner pilgrimages these public school Montessori teachers travel an uneasy path. They are on edge, wary of falling into traditional ways of being-with children, anxious that they might

control rather than guide. They work in the many shadows cast by state standards and tests, uneasily aware that the shadows sometimes cause them to lose sight of the children in their care. The teachers voice uneasiness carried by the word negotiate as they talk about an edgy wariness that colors classroom life in the shadow of these tests.

Slowing Down on a Helter Skelter Slide

Ruth is torn between her mastery of traditional teaching practices and the Montessori *ethos* she embraces:

My Montessori philosophy was kind of holding me back from doing what the state was asking us to do.... I could do it if it was traditional, because I had spent lots of years doing it as traditional, if I ran the show. But ... I was having a real difficult time making the two meet.

Ruth is relatively new to teaching Montessori in public schools, but she taught for many years as a public school teacher who “ran the show.” She is caught between the Montessori philosophy she loves and her sense of responsibility to the state curriculum. She is in a confusing in-between place, and she says it feels helter-skelter to her, like a funhouse slide that spirals down crazily from a great height:

I have all the county’s objectives.... A lot of what they teach in the fourth and the fifth grade, we teach it down in the first, second and third grade and they’re not going to get tested on it until the fourth grade, and I’m going, “But I have to teach that!” ... It’s very helter-skelter.

Ruth’s words remind me of the Beatles’ song, “Helter skelter/ ... I’m coming down fast but don’t let me break you” (Lennon & McCartney, 1968). Ruth does not want to break the rhythm of the children’s enthusiasm and interests by coming down on them too fast on the helter skelter slide of the state curriculum. She wants to help them find their way on their journey toward self-creation by keeping a slow, even pace that makes it possible for her students to dwell in the moment, and appreciate curious and interesting things about their world. Although she feels a strong sense of responsibility for teaching the

state curriculum, she trusts the Montessori philosophy and does not want to give it up.

The tension between her sense of responsibility to the state and her loving attention to the children's needs makes Ruth's negotiation of public school Montessori life uneasy.

Letting Go to Allow a Letting Be in Students' Becoming

Emma's classroom life, too, is marked by constant inner negotiations between the state curriculum and the Montessori philosophy. The state testing requirements are often loud and insistent, but her Montessori training has deep and powerful meaning for her. She is acutely aware of all the requirements of the state test, but she also is energetically focused on the children's developmental needs:

When the children are really doing what they want and need to do in the classroom ... I have had days or hours where I'm kind of looking around and everyone's busy and engaged, and it's meaningful. And so I feel this pressure, "Oh gosh, I should just quickly call a lesson. What lesson should I call? What's on my huge [state test] agenda?" And sometimes I just don't do it.

Emma's pedagogical concerns are twofold in this story. The lived curriculum she values arises from the meaningful work of children who are doing "what they want and need to do." The other curriculum, the state's planned curriculum, she thinks of as a huge state test agenda. Aoki (2005e) explores the interaction of curriculum as plan and curriculum as lived experience in the life of a teacher, Miss O:

Miss O sets aside ... the language of the privileged ego, and beckons a language of pedagogy that might help her reunderstand "self/other." ... Hence, she sees pedagogic leading not so much as asking the followers to follow because the leader always knows the way. Rather, she sees it as a responsible responding to students. Such a leading entails at times a letting go that allows a letting be in students' own becoming. (p. 213)

Miss O at times lets go of her plans to teach the district's curriculum, to allow letting be in her students' becoming. Emma, too, sometimes lets go of her "huge [state test] agenda" because she sees that the children are doing what they want and need to do. She

turns her attention from the test agenda to the mysterious inner source within the children that guides them to do what they need to do in their journeys of becoming.

David Levin (1989) explores Heidegger's concept of an attitude of being, *Gelassenheit*, which Levin translates as "letting go" and "letting be." He characterizes this state of being as "focused, discriminating, selective, and concentrated" (p. 227) and acknowledges it is difficult to attain. Like Ms. O, Emma responds to the children with focused, selective, and concentrated leading. At times she lets go of her own plans to allow space for the students' being and becoming. Hultgren (1995) characterizes the experience of letting go in teaching as a place of tension between knowing, doing and being with students, and she poses questions about this tensioned place that suggest the complexities involved in seeking to "let go" and "let be:"

In what manner do we meet each other in our teaching and learning together?... When do we remain silent, and when do we venture forth with our saying, our naming and most of all our questioning? These questions call for a lingering that brings us to dwelling in a place, an idea, with persons. Such lingering cannot be driven by abstract theory or methodology, but rather by lived relations with those we teach and learn from. (pp. 386-387)

For Emma, moments when lingering attentiveness to the being and becoming of children wins out over the demands of the state test are hard won. She spends her summers studying the relationship between the state curriculum and the lessons in her Montessori albums. The lists of correlations she produces gives her some peace of mind:

When the panic comes, because it inevitably comes – "Oh my gosh, I've got to teach this before this exam!" – when that comes, I can see right there, "Oh! These are the Montessori lessons that will teach that indicator," as opposed to, "I have to teach that right now, let me flip to the index in that textbook and turn to page what have you."

For Emma, negotiating the shadowy pathways of public school Montessori classrooms means trying to carefully map out the journey ahead of time. She searches for

correlations between what she values and what the state asks her to teach. The word correlation is derived from *cor*, a Latin prefix meaning together, and the Latin word *relat*, meaning to carry (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 2003). She wants to find ways the Montessori curriculum and the state test agenda can work together to carry her safely along her day-to-day inner pilgrimage. She doesn't want to flip to an index in a textbook when "the panic comes;" she wants to draw from her Montessori albums.

Metaphorically, Emma's tensioned efforts to correlate brings her to a place between the Montessori philosophy and a technical orientation to teaching. This is a place between a lived curriculum that arises from attentive responsiveness to children's pathways of becoming, and a planned curriculum that arises from theory and technique. Even with careful mapping, Emma is uneasy in this terrain. She worries about parts of the Montessori curriculum-of-becoming she neglects as she keeps her eye on the state tests:

You know we use our math materials constantly, but maybe our cultural curriculum materials we just dust them off every once in awhile. And there are really wonderful materials in there!

There is regret in her words for the wonderful cultural materials gathering dust on the shelves. She can correlate Montessori math lessons with state math indicators.

Correlation is a statistical tool that is useful when comparisons are being made between countable or measurable objects. For matters that depend on a meaning-making subject, though, correlations are not helpful.

Like Aoki, Levin and Hultgren, Emma finds herself valuing a terrain that is off the map made by her correlations, a terrain where "leading entails at times a letting go that allows a letting be in students' own becoming." In Emma's story, testing pressure takes time away from those Montessori lessons called the cultural studies that lead children to think about who they are in the universe. Testing pressure makes negotiation

of her Montessori public school pathways uneasy and edgy because it takes time and focus away from the meaning-making work of teacher and children. What might make “letting go” and “letting be” more possible in Montessori public school classrooms? What might help guide the teacher-guides, as they travel on pathways between planned curriculum and lived curriculum, seeking clearings where teachers can let themselves “be put in question by the question whereby we yield to that which we see – a giving and a receiving of our capacity to be human” (Hultgren, 1995, p. 378)?

Searching for Room to Talk

Margaret is newer to public schools, and she struggles with school system initiatives and mandated curricular sequences when they run counter to the developmentally-based sequence she learned in her training:

Maybe developmentally this is an abstract concept and certain things have to come before that in order to have it blossom.... Okay, if [the school system] wants that to happen in first grade, what do I have to do to help the children get there, but then, if that’s out of sequence from what we know about getting to abstraction for Montessori, where is the room for us to talk about that?

When she tries to comply with the school system’s mandates, she experiences resistance from her students, so she strives to create lessons that will meet the needs of the children and follow the school system’s sequence:

I think the behavior is, “Okay I’ll just do it and get this over with.” I think there’s a certain feeling about that.... I think the more concrete it is at the beginning in order to understand the concept, and if I don’t rush that process the better off it is for them.... But I could do more.

Margaret watches children’s responses to school system mandates and sees that they do the work she asks them to do, but only in order to “get this over with.” Their engagement is not deep. This is a different kind of working, and it is not the kind of working she

values for her students. She keeps returning to an uneasy sense that she is not yet teaching the state requirements in a Montessori way:

Where I feel the most disturbance right now in my room is making sure the [state test] requirements are taught in a Montessori way. I'm still making some of the history/cultural cards so the kids can get at that information in a more Montessori way than direct instruction.

In Margaret's school system, third grade students are tested on, among other things, ancient Greece, Rome, and Mali, simple and compound machines, energy and matter, behavioral and physical adaptations of animals, aquatic and terrestrial food chains, phases of the moon, tides, seasonal changes, the water cycle, animal life cycles and the components of soil. The specificity of testing requirements runs counter to her Montessorian's understanding that elementary teachers should touch the children's imaginations, lead them to ask big questions about the universe, and provide them with the means and the time to explore their interests freely. Margaret yearns to be able to weave the state curriculum into Montessori's great stories of the universe. She wants to be able to negotiate this territory in a "more Montessori way than direct instruction." She is traversing a terrain characterized by assumptions about teaching that are very different from her own. Where the state standards of learning assume that students must acquire a set body of information on a predetermined timeline, Margaret and her Montessori colleagues assume they should prepare an environment that encourages children to explore their interests and discover who they are and what they can do with their lives.

Aoki (2005e) questions assumptions made by state curriculum planners like those who plan the state standards of learning for Margaret's school. He finds that this kind of curriculum planning is dominated by a modernist, technical, rational vision of the world, and he calls on curriculum planners to "decenter the modernist-laden curricular

landscape” (p. 208) and begin to attend to the stories of classroom life lived by students and teachers. Margaret’s yearning to offer “that information in a more Montessori way” resonates with Aoki’s sense that wise teachers like his Miss O allow “space for stories, anecdotes, and narratives that embody the lived dimension of curriculum life” (p. 209).

Filtering the Jargon and Shutting Out the Buzz Words

Because Trixie values the natural flow of meaningful work in her classroom, she veers away from school system initiatives that she sees as “made up work:”

It’s getting in the way of the stuff that’s the real work of the classroom... Any time you sit 21 or 25 or how many kids down and you say, “Now we’re going to do a little writing prompt here,” that, to me is made up work. It’s not the work of the kids, and it’s valueless. Completely and totally valueless. So that kind of thing is very irritating to me.

Trixie makes this comment in the context of a story about a time when her school system mandated that all children in the school write on the same topic at the same time. The purpose of the activity was to gather data about children’s writing. It was an activity based on assumptions about the nature of accountability at odds with Trixie’s understandings. This kind of data gathering assumes that the quality of children’s writing can and should be measured in a standardized way, in order to give direction to the teacher’s planning for the class. But teacher-controlled writing in Trixie’s story is vilified because it has no intrinsic worth for the children. She goes beyond simply placing the judgment “valueless” on such activities. She distances herself from language that comes with these mandated activities by calling it jargon and saying that the jargon’s buzz words make her go “click” as in a switch turning off:

I detest the jargon, I cannot stand it. All you have to do is say any of those buzz words to me and I go “Click.”

Jargon refers in its earliest sense to the chatter of birds (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 2003). School system jargon is as meaningless as birds' chatter to Trixie, and it is irritating like the incessant buzzing of a fly. To her, having all the children write on the same topic is a waste of the children's time, and she distances herself from school system initiatives that waste the children's time. She shuts herself off from shallow, made-up work: "Click." The work she sees as valuable is work that reflects the children's interests, and she finds she can teach them what they need to know about the conventions of writing through personal interactions with them about that work:

I think that when children write about things that they're interested in that's the best kind of writing there can be.... All I want them to do is to be able to organize their ideas in a way that makes them understandable. I want them to expand their vocabulary. I want them to learn how to punctuate so they can be understood.... Over the years I've of course always had my children writing. But ... everything was very much individualized.

As Jardine and Rinehart (2003) explore the use of writing in language arts curricula, they express a worry that teacher-directed writing activities sometimes take away from the ability of children and teachers to attend directly to their experiences:

Their writing is desirable for teachers to have them do, because it leaves them with collectable, traceable artifacts on the basis of which they can make claims about and stake claim to knowledge of the children they teach.... We slip easily and unintentionally from lived experience, to mindfulness to such experience, to notability, to documentability, to accountability, to countability. (pp. 81-82)

As she negotiates the pathways of her public school teaching life, Trixie feels deeply accountable for her students' progress. But her sense of accountability is less about counting and more about mindfulness. She does not want to waste the children's time. She filters the public school "jargon" and selects judiciously from it. Her inner

negotiations with public school initiatives always come back to a question of whether or not the “extra things” interrupt the flow of children’s work:

Wherever there’s an opportunity for those kinds of things, put them in naturally, don’t let them interrupt what you’re doing. They’ll come up on their own.

Trixie negotiates an uneasy inner peace as decisions come up about which of the many different ideas she encounters she will allow to filter into her classroom. Ideas are questioned in light of the children’s interests. Sometimes school system initiatives seem like meaningless chatter, but other times they can come into the classroom naturally and enrich the children’s experiences.

Stepping Out of the Free Flow

The most experienced Montessorian, Anne, is the only teacher who expresses appreciation of ideas she has taken in from public schools. She feels these ideas have potential to enrich her pedagogy. She talks about her school system’s reading program and how it fits into her classroom:

Montessori’s idea of reading is give the child a book and have them read. And yes, they do, but if you have guided reading the child really gets insights at a very young age that are carried through.

She also talks about bringing the children’s work out of the “free flow Montessori-whatever:”

I feel that the emphasis on writing that they have is really important. I feel that for third-graders, it’s a bit too sophisticated, but ... it just boosts you out of the free flow Montessori-whatever. That’s good!

Clifford and Friesen (2003b) agree that children benefit from instruction that deepens their understandings:

Left to their own devices, children often develop very flawed understandings based on their personal experiences of the world.... These powerful, informal habits of learning ... are just as likely to lead children to

construct powerful stereotypes about people and events and to overlook the meaning or implications of activities in which they are engaged. (p. 101)

Anne uses new ideas when they help children become more deeply engaged with the things that fascinate them. She connects new ideas with her Montessori curriculum albums, then extends the lessons to help children think about their experiences in new ways. Like Trixie, though, her peace with school system mandates is an uneasy one. Although she says she is open to school system initiatives, Anne frequently returns to her Mantra: “If you are really true to your albums and you just cover all the stuff in there, they’re going to get the information.” Ultimately she always returns to her training and her touchstone belief in following the child:

If it works for the kids, then that’s good. And they’re proud of it, and they work for it; and it’s meaningful to them.... You have to follow the child.... You have to be very clear about what works for the kids.

What empowers Anne to hear voices from outside not as a noisy cacophony or meaningless chatter, but rather as possibilities for enriching her shared pilgrimage with her students? She seems to feel she is on solid ground even in the midst of shadows, perhaps because after so many years of teaching she can see whether or not an experience is meaningful to children. She says, “If they get it, okay, if they don’t, it’s inappropriate.” She is ready and willing to try new ideas, but she also is ready to drop anything that she feels is “inappropriate.”

Anne’s words suggest a state of creative tension, like Aoki’s (2005h) “tensionality that allows good thoughts and actions to arise when properly tensioned chords are struck” (p. 162). As she dwells between school system initiatives and her allegiance to following the child, she seems to be in “a place open to many possibilities ... where new lines of thought can spring forth, running in many directions simultaneously. As such, it is a

fertile place” (Aoki, 2005b, p. 299). She is grounded in her Montessori albums, but she is responsive to the voices that surround her from the public school system. She is willing to step “out of the free flow,” although not out of her basic allegiance to supporting the meaning-making experiences of children.

Sharing the Map

Andrew’s need to negotiate the meaning of Montessori becomes clear to him in his first year as a Montessori teacher at a new public charter school. The parents who send their children to the school do not always understand the Montessori philosophy; some choose the school simply because it is something different. Andrew, who agrees to be a teacher representative to the school’s governing council, finds himself in a position of constantly trying to explain what Montessori is, at the same time he is coming to understand it himself:

There was a huge discussion about, “What is Montessori?” So I learned a lot that year.... Because they were really defining ... what that meant. So it was a very interesting year. At that point it was meetings until 11 or 12 at night, there was a lot of discourse and I said, [to a friend who was a prospective principal], please come so I can teach!

After one summer of Montessori training, he finds himself in a self-directed internship. This means he is teaching on his own except for monthly consultations with a Montessori teacher. Everyday he plans and teaches newly-learned lessons from his Montessori albums, tries to pull in the state curriculum, and works to become familiar with a new group of children. The complexity of his situation is compounded because he is also working with children who have no Montessori experience. Most of the children are elementary-age and are already acculturated to a teacher-controlled classroom life, so he also needs to help them learn what it means to be independent in a classroom. During this first year he is thinking on his feet, learning about being a Montessori teacher during

his days with children and reflecting on his learning in the evenings with the parents running the school. “They didn’t buy into the intrinsically motivated child that’s following their interest. They didn’t buy into all that.”

Andrew’s identity as a Montessori teacher forms in a crucible. He makes a decision to become a Montessori teacher, and he experiences this becoming as “something in the heart.” Then, in his very first year, he is called on to put words to the understandings of his heart. As Godwin (2001) suggests, Andrew calls on “*heart*, which always relates to the whole, that must infuse the voice if it is to make the living connections and keep the circulation between all the parts moving” (p. 302). As he explores in the classroom what it means to follow the child, he finds himself trying to voice those meanings with parents and school system administrators. He learns to “keep your head while allowing your heart to be moved” (Godwin, 2001, pp. 56-57). During his first year, he dwells in a space of constant, heart-felt reflection on his teaching experiences:

I was really defining myself as a Montessorian at the same time the school was defining itself. It helped me define what I was more quickly, because I almost had to stand up for Montessori as I was learning about it.... It was a struggle sometimes.

In standing up for the way of teaching he chose when he decided to take training, Andrew becomes strong in his beliefs and he also comes to believe in the power of sharing his search for orientation. His heart work connects him with the heads and the hearts of others who question the meanings of their public school Montessori experiences. Mountain Dreamer (2005) calls this kind of search for shared meanings the creative work that makes us human:

This is the root of the creative work we do: the desire to intimately touch and share the truth of our lives and our world, to find and follow the

sometimes-hidden thread stitching ourselves and our reality into wholeness.... It's what makes us human, this capacity to co-create the truth that sustains us from the stuff of our dreams and our lives. (pp. 14-15)

Now in his sixth year, Andrew thinks of his evolving understandings as a puzzle to be solved: "It's an intricate puzzle. I really think it is. It's an intricate puzzle to solve." Like Anne, he is determined to stay true to his albums. Like Emma, he tries to map out the terrain. But more than any of the other teachers, he talks about sharing his search for orientation not only with parents, but also with his students. He tries to create a map of the curriculum puzzle that the students can follow:

I sat down and I wrote ... a scope and sequence for the kids, so the kids could follow the scope and sequence. And it's worked out lovely because they've sort of chosen.... So I like that.... "All right, here it is. Here's the big picture." And then they can follow it.... They can see the puzzle.... And you're their possible help to unlock that puzzle.

Again, Andrew returns to the image of a puzzle. He sees himself, with his shared curriculum map, as a possible help for children to unlock the puzzle of the state's scope and sequence. He pictures himself with his students in a kind of maze, dwelling in-between curriculum-as-plan and curriculum-as-something-in -the-heart. Andrew is not irritated by the state tests; he sees them as a creative challenge to himself and his students. He pictures himself in the midst of the puzzling curriculum maze, side-by-side with his students. He is certainly not following the child in this image. He and the children are working their way together through a challenging puzzle, and he is someone they can look to for help in unlocking the mysteries of the state curriculum. Andrew celebrates above all "that cosmic task of seeing something larger than themselves." Like Greene (1995), he encourages in his students "the possibility of looking at things as if they could be otherwise" (p. 16), and he finds that it is lovely to creatively involve children in planning for their shared journey through the state curriculum.

Journeying Through an Uneasy Terrain

Grumet (1998) tells us liminal spaces offer possibilities of thoughtful awareness and playful discovery. Reynolds (2003) finds power in border places. Aoki (2005b) celebrates “a tensioned place that could vibrate in difference ... a place where new lines of thought can spring forth” (p. 299). For Andrew, Anne, Trixie, Ruth, Emma and Margaret, the liminal space of public Montessori schools is certainly a place for thoughtful awareness. Their work with children is important to them, serious, and edgy. Their goals for their students derive from a vision of what it is to be a good person in the world, a person who is kind and thoughtful and responsible. Movement toward that goal is made by guiding children to work that engages interest and builds confidence. They draw upon a vast repertoire of lessons passed on through Montessori teacher training programs and housed in personal curriculum albums. They view their children’s progress over the long stretch of a three year cycle that ought to give children freedom to breathe.

Possibilities for exploration and discovery, however, are too often curtailed by frequent quantitative evaluations of the children’s progress. This testing narrows the teachers’ focus and leaves some children keenly aware of the fact that everybody else has learned what they don’t yet understand. In public schools, the Montessori *ethos* is challenged by taken-for-granted assumptions about teaching and learning that privilege standardizing, controlling and testing. Parents, administrative staff and academic leaders who have not been drawn-in to the Montessori world view assume Montessorians can teach and test in the same way other public school teachers teach and test.

The Montessori teachers are in foreign territory. They feel compelled to speak the language of the dominant culture, and they struggle to keep their awareness and focus on

their students' journeys of becoming. The jargon of public schools can be jarring to them. For the two teachers who are newer to public schools, Margaret and Ruth, a helter-skelter quality colors their planning as they try to weave their way through two different curricula and two different world views. Even for more experienced teachers there are moments of panic: "Oh my gosh, I've got to teach this before this exam!" and that weighs heavily on their minds. From the more experienced teachers I hear a sense of being secure in their knowledge of the Montessori curriculum, and a willingness to add "extra things that really kind of round it out for the kids." The same teachers express regret, though, because they can't always find time to let children repeat work they need to repeat or learn something in another way that might make it come alive for them.

The teachers accept into their classrooms those ideas that don't feel contrary, that don't seem like interruptions. They pull in new ideas if they can do so naturally, in a Montessori way that doesn't interrupt the flow of classroom work. Sometimes they are deeply conflicted. Their inner negotiations tell them to stick to their albums, even when they feel doubt. They think, "Stay true to your albums and if you just cover all the stuff in there, they're going to get the information." And they remind themselves, don't interrupt the flow. Yet they also think maybe it's not a bad thing for something to boost you out of the free flow Montessori-whatever. Extend the lessons a little bit to give children a full range of things. But it is frustrating to have to teach things "right away; and ... in their terms, with their format." Even if you don't really like or care about the tests, "you just have to be aware ...and beef up." It's disturbing trying to make sure the students are prepared for tests in a Montessori way; maybe we could do more, but "Montessori programs can be way ahead of the state tests, you know?" It's better not to rush the

process, though. And “where is the room for us to talk about that?” They weave the patterns of their classroom lives on a loom threaded with uneasy tension and edgy awareness.

Boundaries at Edge Places

As I explore in Chapter Three, Heidegger finds that boundaries are beginning places, places where we encounter something new: “The boundary is that from which something *begins its essential unfolding*” (Heidegger, 1993a, p. 356). Moving along the edges of our accustomed arenas we stand ready to journey outside our taken for granted understandings, but we are not always ready or willing to cross into new domains. Sometimes people who live on the edges of contested arenas erect barriers to protect their chosen way-of-life.

The Wall Between

Ruth, whose journey circled between traditional education and Montessori for many years has gone “back and forth across the doorsill/where the two worlds touch” (Rumi, 1995, p. 36). From her position on the Montessori side of this doorsill, she can see ghostly walls between inside and outside. She tells a poignant story about running into a barrier erected by a Montessori teacher. The story takes place in Italy where she is a young, traditionally trained teacher working with a Montessori teacher in a NATO school. The teacher (directress) berates her for the way she keeps order in the classroom:

Just having little children learn how to put things back on the shelf was an accomplishment. When they took it out, they put it away. But my directress was very upset that they didn’t put it away in the exact same spot. And I didn’t know that the red truck was supposed to be first, it had to always be the red truck. She got very upset with me because I just had this truck shelf and the kids didn’t know where to put the red truck and where to put the yellow truck.

As Ruth tells the story of the Montessori directress' anger over the misplaced truck, she sounds both indignant and hurt. From her current position as a Montessori teacher, she realizes that placement of red and yellow trucks on a shelf is not a part of the Montessori curriculum or philosophy. The Montessori directress in this story uses her criticism to place herself firmly on the inside of an invisible wall. At the same time, she places Ruth just as firmly on the outside. Ruth is not yet a Montessori teacher. She has participated in a correspondence course, but the course offers little guidance: "It was very little philosophy and mostly just how to use the materials, and the materials that they talked about I didn't have." She has no way to understand or even really see the teacher's wall.

Ellsworth (1997) explores the kind of boundary Ruth encounters in her story:

There are unstable, unenforceable boundaries between outside (society) and inside (psychic effect of feeling, or the individual psyche)... The gaps between self and other, inside and outside ... are scenes troubled by cognitive uncertainty, forbidden thoughts, unreliable and unstable perception.... Any attempt to say who "I am" – to make my language become fully identical with itself and with myself – brings me up against ... the gap between what is spoken and what is referred to, up against language's inevitable misfire. (pp. 42-44)

Ruth experiences just such a "gap between what is spoken and what is referred to." The Montessori teacher builds a wall, perhaps in order to protect her sense of who she is in this halfway Montessori school that hires non-Montessorians and equips the classroom with red and yellow trucks rather than Montessori materials. She speaks of the red and yellow trucks in establishing Ruth's outsider status. What she seems to be referring to is her own unstable position as a Montessorian in an unsupportive environment. She does not express the way she feels about being unsupported, though. Instead she places an emotional boundary between herself and the intruder, Ruth. The teacher's language does not clearly express her inner sense of what it means to be a Montessorian. It misfires. It

fails to communicate who she is and what she believes. Instead, her language sets up a barrier that keeps Ruth solidly on the outside.

Something There Is That Doesn't Love a Wall

Trixie expresses a sense of outrage toward Montessorians' linguistic barriers. She works at a school-within-a-school, and wants a collegial atmosphere with non-Montessori teachers in the building:

We don't take the needs of other people into account as well. And sometimes things that get said at staff meetings, ... I think, "Oh my God, I can't believe you just said that!" Because they're so offensive.... I want very much to be in a peaceful state when I'm teaching at this school.

Trixie wants to be accepted by other teachers in the school, to live in peace with her public school colleagues and be respectful of their needs. But her Montessori colleagues sometimes say things that interrupt that peaceful co-existence. In trying to talk about who they are, they come up against gaps between what they say and what they are referring to. Trixie hears their linguistic misfires as rudeness, and she is appalled by the disrespect she hears in the words of some of her Montessori colleagues:

I can remember talking to one Montessori teacher ... who told me that she loved children but she couldn't stand adults. She treated people with GREAT disrespect. I was flabbergasted by that and I know people to this day who do that, and I think, "You are the worst advertisement for Montessori that I've seen in a long time."

She is appalled because she feels the rudeness of her fellow Montessorians is unkind. She also fears that this unkindness reflects on her:

And you don't treat them like morons either ... for crying out loud. Why do you think this? These are human beings who have feelings. And right now their feelings toward you and also potentially toward the rest of us are not too good.... I wouldn't be a Montessori teacher if I didn't think that this was the way to teach ... but ... I have immense respect for the other people in the building who don't teach the way I teach.

Giroux (2005) explores “the dialectical nature of the relationship between difference and voice:”

In this perspective, culture is not seen as monolithic or unchanging, but as a site of multiple and heterogeneous borders where different histories, languages, experiences, and voices intermingle amidst diverse relations of power and privilege. Within this pedagogical cultural borderland known as school, subordinated cultures push against and permeate the alleged unproblematic and homogeneous borders of dominant cultural forms and practices. (p. 145)

Giroux is interested in schools as an arena in which students form personal, political and social identities, “as they give meaning to the dreams, desires, and subject positions that they inhabit” (p. 145). He believes that educators should try to provide conditions that make it possible for students to voice their realities:

Voice provides a critical referent for analyzing how students are made voiceless in particular settings by not being allowed to speak, or how students silence themselves out of either fear or ignorance regarding the strength and possibilities that exist in the multiple languages and experiences that connect them to a sense of agency and self-formation. (p. 146)

Trixie is uneasy with the way her Montessori colleagues voice their concerns, and she does not want to be associated with their problematic pushing against the dominant culture. She wants a sense of kinship and community with all staff members. She respects her non-Montessori colleagues, even though she has chosen a very different pedagogical relationship to her students. She is edgy in her edge place. She wants language to be used carefully by her Montessori colleagues so there can be a peaceful sense of community and kinship. However, she, too, sometimes erects barriers:

You begin to wonder am I depriving my kids of something by not caving, by not doing this? But I notice that they get themselves involved in ... this initiative, ... that initiative, usually it's renaming something that's come before it. The same stuff just rehashed with a different name on it and to me that is such a terrific waste of energy and a lot of resources.

When she names school system initiatives “a terrific waste of energy,” Trixie, too, pushes against the dominant pedagogical culture in public schools. She does not want to “cave in” under the weight of “this, that, or the other thing,” so she silently questions the dominant pedagogical practices in her public school, while within her own classroom she tries to stay true to Montessori practices.

What is it like for Montessori teachers to question silently the dominant educational paradigm, the “industrial metaphor that currently controls children’s education, with its training and testing” (Rivkin, 1991a, p. 172)? Rivkin (1991b) tells us, “What we name the world shapes how we see it” (p. 74), and she honors the naming of what we understand: “the careful insights, the living experiences reflected into ideas” (p. 75). When Montessori teachers silence their own voices in the hallways and meeting places of public schools, what becomes of the sense of who they are as teachers within their classrooms? What are the possibilities for living in peaceful community within public schools while daring to voice “the careful insights, the living experiences reflected into ideas,” gained in dwelling with children in Montessori classrooms?

The Frozen-Ground-Swell Under

Margaret, who works in the same school as Trixie, thinks deeply about the boundaries she senses between herself and non-Montessori teachers in her building; she longs to push against the walls. She does not want to feel silenced. She spent years as a traditional teacher, and now feels uneasy always being called on to speak the language of traditional education. She experiences the use of that language as a form of domination.

Recall her story about the experience of learning the language of Montessorians:

You’re in this murky water where you’re trying to swim and get to the other side, and suddenly you have this burst – after practicing and learning

the language, you suddenly are starting to dream in the second language.... And you've gotten to the other side.

After a strenuous swim across murky waters Margaret has arrived at the other side, and now she finds herself speaking a language that marks her as an outsider in public schools. In training, she learns a language that Montessorians use among themselves and in their classrooms to create a way-of-life with children. She finds herself at home with the language of Montessori teaching practices. Her dreams for her classroom and her vision of what classroom life can be are expressed in this language, and she wants someone on the other side of the wall to break through the barriers and hear what her way of speaking has to offer:

Sometimes I really, truly feel like somebody speaking a second language here.... I feel like I sometimes can't make myself heard. They can't hear me. Like, there's a part of them that just can't hear what I'm saying.

Margaret feels silenced, unable to make herself heard by non-Montessorians who hold power in the school. Kreisberg finds that dominant cultures often do not listen to the voices of those with less power:

Those who hold power over others can ... remain separate from the powerless, closed to their feelings, experiences, to their "souls." They do not have to hear or try to understand the voices of the powerless.... Thus the *power over* relationship cuts off human communication and creates barriers to human empathy and understanding. This separation from and deafness to the experiences of the powerless creates the space in which domination is exerted and thrives. (1992, p. 47)

The language of scientific, technical thinking is spoken by those in power in public schools, and Margaret feels powerless when she is unable to overcome what she experiences as deafness to her lived understandings as a Montessori teacher. Giroux finds that the question of voice is a central idea as he thinks about power structures in the borderland cultures of schools:

Language is a terrain of struggle.... When language is used to raise questions that have not been raised, or is struggling to name problems outside of traditional critical discourses, people will always feel uncomfortable with such a discourse. This is the price one pays for pushing the edge of language. (2005, p. 198)

Margaret's way of speaking about teaching and learning pushes against the edges of scientific and technical language used in public schools. Gadamer (1960/2003) reflects on the worldview revealed in the scientific naming she pushes against:

The world of objects that science knows, and from which it derives its own objectivity, is one of the relativities embraced by language's relation to the world. In it the concept of "being-in-itself" acquires the character of a *determination of the will*.... What exists "in itself" in the sense of modern science is determined as certain knowledge, which permits us to control things. (p. 450)

In the technical language of science, educators analyze what children need to know. They create curriculum documents that lay out the knowledge needed by all, and a timetable that determines when children will acquire each bit of predetermined learning required for success in adult life. Test makers then devise instruments to measure acquisition of learning (achievement), and publish data about student achievement so that interested parties can judge the success of schools. The curriculum in this paradigm is an object that can be controlled, and the children's learning is also an object to be manipulated, controlled and measured.

The language of Montessorians pushes away from the worldview offered by scientific language in which student learning is an object of scientific measurement and analysis. Montessorians use a more poetic language, a language that arose from Montessori's images of pilgrimage, hidden treasures within the soul of the child, and cosmic work. Jardine, Clifford and Friesen (2003) ask educators to imagine schools in

which teachers speak a less technical language. They suggest language that might call teachers to enter their classrooms “with care and love and generosity” (p. xv):

Imagine if we treated *these* things as the basics of teaching and learning: relation, ancestry, commitment, participation, interdependence, belonging, desire, conversation, memory, place, topography, tradition, inheritance, experience, identity, difference, renewal, generativity, intergenerationality, discipline, care, strengthening, attention, devotion, transformation, character. (p. xiii)

Montessori teachers bring to their classrooms a poetic language that shapes their pedagogical relations with children. Their language helps them imagine, as Jardine, Clifford and Friesen (2003) suggest, a different way of being-with children. As Gadamer (1960/2003) suggests, the language they use creates a worldview:

Coming to an understanding ... is a life process in which a community of life is lived out.... Human language must be thought of as a special and unique life process since in linguistic communication, “world” is disclosed. Reaching an understanding in language places a subject matter before those communicating. (p. 446)

Margaret wants her world to be understood by those in power in her public school. She wants them to be able to imagine teaching and learning relations as she does. She wants them to try to understand her community that defines itself by its use of language. She pushes against the boundaries of a technical worldview that might pull her back into the dominant mode of discourse she left behind when she swam across the waters to a new way-of-being.

Ruth, Trixie and Margaret all tell stories of boundaries between Montessorians and traditional educators. Ruth tells of being harshly placed on the outside by a Montessori teacher. Trixie says she feels uncomfortable as she watches her Montessori colleagues placing people outside their Montessori boundaries. Margaret tells of a longing to breach boundaries and share her world with traditional teachers and

administrators. These stories of boundaries seem to come from a powerful yearning place in the hearts of women whose lives are lived in an edge place.

Something There is That Wants the Wall Down

We keep the wall between us as we go.
 To each the boulders that have fallen to each.
 And some are loaves and some so nearly balls
 We have to use a spell to make them balance:
 “Stay where you are until our backs are turned!”
 We wear our fingers rough with handling them....
 Something there is that doesn't love a wall,
 That wants it down. (Frost 1914/1991, p. 28)

Boundaries might offer a feeling of protection in edge places, but as Frost says, they can be precarious and hard won. Trixie and Margaret work at the same school, and they both sense walls going up at the places where traditional teaching and Montessori teaching touch each other. Both teachers want the walls down. Trixie is outraged and embarrassed by what she sees as offensive behavior by a fellow Montessorian who says she loves children but can't stand adults. This teacher builds walls to keep the dominant adult world out of her child-centered universe. In a gentler way, however, Trixie, too, retreats behind walls when she feels traditional approaches to teaching trying to make their way into her world. She wants no part of the initiatives she sees as wasting energy and resources, and she certainly does not feel comfortable with the idea of caving in. And Margaret, who looks for ways to breach the walls, nevertheless holds true to her Montessori language and wishes administrators and traditional teachers would try to understand it: “I desperately want them to read some of our literature and understand why we have some of the language patterns that we have.” She longs for her traditional colleagues to peer across the walls to her side and simply express curiosity about her way-of-being. What is needed on both sides of the wall to allow for an opening? What is

the source of absence of curiosity Margaret senses? Are there ways in which boundaries of language meet unspoken needs for those who keep the wall between them as they go?

Boundaries seem to offer both a sense of protection and a tenuous desire to reach across. Boundaries are edge places, liminal places, places that beckon those within to cross over, to stay awake, and to question. As Rumi says, “You must ask for what you really want. Don’t go back to sleep” (1995, p. 36). In public schools, Montessori teachers are both teachers and Montessorians. Sometimes they present themselves simply as teachers, as they greet non-Montessorians and talk about children’s moods, staff meetings and paperwork. However, even when they choose to keep their Montessori persona hidden in shared spaces they remain committed to their Montessori identity within their classrooms. It is a commitment to Montessori’s ideals that helps them to “see” children in their classrooms.

In the voices of these six experienced Montessori public teachers, I hear some carefully measured acceptance of changes and additions to their teaching practices. But the measure of success of anything they allow into their classrooms is whether or not it “works” for their students. Do the children embrace it, take ownership of it, learn something valuable in working with it? Anything that distracts their students from their cosmic task of self-creation is not welcomed. Vigilance of practice weighs each new intrusion against the standard, “Does it follow the child?” Does it allow the teacher to be attentive and responsive to the children’s needs? There does not seem to be a belief that “there are ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ ways of doing things, in regard to the imperatives laid down in Montessori educational theory” as Malm (2003, p. 14) suggests; rather there seem to be right and wrong ways of doing things according to how children respond.

These Montessori teachers express a sense that their public school classrooms are like Aoki's (2005b) "tensioned place that could vibrate in difference" (p. 299), but the tensions that sing most beautifully for them are those brought in by the children in their charge. They are quite willing to do cartwheels and sing arias to reach children, but they are not trying to reach children in order to improve achievement. They are trying to reach children in order to help those children grow into confident, responsible, caring, well-informed and competent adults. New lines of thought that spring forth in their classrooms spring from their transformed way-of-being, their attentive observations, their careful efforts to find what works for each of the particular personalities growing daily within their domain. They dwell in the midst of what Reynolds (2003) calls movement between differences. Their classrooms are fertile places, like Aoki's "voice that grows in the middle" (2005i, p. 282).

Classroom life for these Montessori teachers is lived in the spaces between and among their understandings of their students' developmental needs, their attention to their students' interests and their acknowledged responsibility to their public school districts to "cover" state curriculum. They diligently study the relationships between state curricula and the Montessori curriculum, but their first concern is the quality of their students' present and future lives; they teach skills and concepts in the interest of meeting students' developmental needs. Standardization of outcomes runs counter to the notion of attending to each student in his or her individual being and becoming.

The teachers I conversed with are experienced, successful Montessori public school teachers. They have found their footing in the sliding landscape of public Montessori schools. They express resistance, frustration and tension, but these themes are

not dominant. Yes, their work is tiring, but it is not overwhelming. They feel they can do more. They do whatever it takes to reach each child as they negotiate the terrain of their shared pilgrimage. They live with hope.

In the next chapter, I turn to an exploration of creative possibilities that might arise from the tensions associated with difference. What are the possibilities for “dwelling aright within” (Aoki, 2005h) these sometimes tense borderlands? What might happen if public school Montessorians risk vulnerability and engage in open conversations about difference? What are the conversations that might reveal commonalities while celebrating differences? How can landscapes of difference be reshaped and rethought to create collegial and supportive communities?

CHAPTER SEVEN: COMMON GROUND

Borderlands are those unintentional, multicultural spaces – sometimes called “common ground” – where disparate cultures meet; where the people living on these peripheries discover cultural parallels, and construct new as well as variable identities, based on – although neither reducible nor limited to – the old ones. (Wellman, 1996, p. 35)

Wellman describes borderlands as places where different cultures touch and respond to each other, and he says that in these spaces people living side-by-side meet each other face-to-face, find common ground, and construct new identities. The six teachers who converse with me about their classroom lives in this study work side-by-side with pedagogical traditions very different from the Montessori traditions they cherish. They work in a kind of borderland, where boundaries are subtle and often hidden from view. The teachers I spoke with all experience tension in their teaching lives, but they also speak of the beauty they find as they journey with children in search of good work that opens up possibilities for growth. They talk about the tension that comes from traveling an uneasy terrain where they stumble across many kinds of walls, but they also tell of friendly, collegial relationships with their more traditional neighbors. In public schools, Montessori teachers, like many other teachers, work in an edgy space in-between two curriculum worlds, a borderland.

I started this research project with a question: **What is the lived experience of Montessori teachers, guiding and being guided by students in Montessori public school classrooms?** This question has carried me into a wide-ranging conversation. I have listened to the voices of teachers, poets, curriculum theorists, and philosophers. As I listen to these voices, I hear a kind of music. I hear dissonance at times, but I also hear harmony, resonance and movement around, away from, and returning to, a tonal center.

My understanding of tension has been transformed by Aoki's voice, in particular. I listen now for the music that sings forth from properly tensioned strings, where once I noticed only the tightness, stress, and unease that comes from feeling stretched taut. In this chapter I set out to imagine possibilities of finding common ground and "dwelling aright within" (Aoki, 2005h) the different and sometimes contradictory perspectives that come together in public Montessori schools.

In the in-between place Montessori public school teachers inhabit, the good of children is named in different ways, and tension lies in the naming of what is good. Voices of public school reform efforts concerned with academic achievement create dissonance as they play across an ideal of attending humbly and patiently to the self-creating work of childhood. Language of accountability as a technical process, that *takes count* of information mastered by students, disturbs the notion of accountability as response-able attentiveness to children's inner lives. Testing timetables aimed at improving schools create a lived experience of rushed and stressful time intruding on the natural unfolding of childhood curiosities and interests.

What are the possibilities for finding common ground between such different notions of caring for the good of children? Noddings (2005) tells us that "People differ on what they mean by *caring*:"

To listen attentively and to respond as positively as possible are the very hallmarks of caring as I have described it. . . . From a perspective quite different from mine, some policymakers and educators believe that caring is a pedagogical virtue demonstrated by forcing students to achieve the skills and acquire the knowledge that . . . is thought to be good for them.
(p. xiv)

Gadamer (1960/2003) suggests that common ground can be found between differing perspectives as we listen to and question each other in conversation:

The world is the common ground,... uniting all who talk to one another. All kinds of human community are kinds of linguistic community.... For language is by nature the language of conversation; it fully realizes itself only in the process of coming to an understanding. (p. 446)

Through talking and listening, Gadamer says, we can come to understandings that allow us to create a shared world.

What are the conversations that might help adults in public Montessori schools work together in productive, creative tension for the good of children? Montessorians and traditional teachers, parents, and administrators in public Montessori schools share space and a moment in time. They touch the lives of children and of each other. Ghostly walls that come between people in classrooms, hallways, offices, and homes, the barriers that arise between adults in schools, are thresholds from which the life force in children unfolds. Lawrence-Lightfoot (2003), who explores encounters between parents and teachers, calls on adults to play out the dialectics of their differing perspectives consciously and purposefully. She finds that through conversations, understandings gained of contrasting points-of-view can grow into mutual trust and caring concern:

Productive encounters require the balancing and embracing of stark contradictions. In seeking meaningful alliances, parents and teachers must build bridges *and* mark boundaries; they must reach out *and* resist; they must find points of mutual identification *and* hold fast to their different perspectives. (p. 246)

Lawrence-Lightfoot's advice rings true for all the adults working together in public Montessori schools. By building bridges, reaching out, and finding points of mutual identification, teachers, parents and administrators can better attend to the good of children; but if they also express their differences, they might come to respect and value each other in ways that enrich their understandings of what it means to work together for the good of children.

Approaching Otherness: Teaching and Being Taught by Difference

To approach the Other in conversation is to welcome his expression, in which at each instant he overflows the idea a thought would carry away from it. It is therefore to *receive* from the Other beyond the capacity of the I, which ... means: to be taught. The relation with the Other, or Conversation, is ... an ethical relation; but inasmuch as it is welcomed this conversation is a teaching. (Levinas, 1961/2000, p. 51)

In conversations and face-to-face encounters, adults in public Montessori schools might begin to find common ground where they can “*receive* from the Other beyond the capacity of the I.” As Levinas says, when we welcome one another into conversation, we are both teacher and learner. In the hallways and meeting places of Montessori public schools, Montessori teachers meet face-to-face with traditional educators and children’s parents. Eyes meet, smiles are exchanged, glimpses of life stories pass back and forth in conversation. In these conversational, face-to-face exchanges, Levinas says we encounter ideas that overflow other people’s inner thinking; receiving these ideas, he says, brings an ethical imperative to reach out to one another. And when we welcome expressions of the ideas of others, he says, we teach and we are taught. We enter a pedagogical relationship.

Common ground where differences can be embraced might be found in the web of pedagogical relationships that crisscrosses public Montessori schools. School system administrators and Montessori teachers meet and learn from each other in observations, conferences and staff meetings. Parents and teachers also meet each other pedagogically. Parents express their families’ needs and strengths and their children’s gifts and challenges; as they converse with Montessori teachers, they also learn about ways the Montessori teaching and learning experience is different from traditional education. Teachers, too, learn from one another as they talk about their teaching lives in conversational encounters with one another. In schools-within-schools, traditional

classroom teachers work side-by-side with Montessorians, and traditional educators often teach physical education, music, art, foreign languages, and special education. Guidance counselors, and reading and math resource teachers, too, are often oriented to a traditional way of teaching. All the adults in public Montessori schools become oriented to one another in a complex dance that weaves between teaching and learning.

Webs of pedagogical relationships are found in other schools as well. But in Montessori public schools the complexity of teaching and being taught by encounters with Otherness is heightened, because Montessori teachers bring such a markedly different orientation to their classroom pedagogical relations; this orientation colors and changes the multitudes of adult-to-adult pedagogical relations. Especially when the pedagogical possibilities of difference are unexpressed or hidden in adult-to-adult exchanges, tensions that arise can become a source of conflict. Margaret expresses something of the tension associated with unexpressed ideas:

[Montessori teachers] didn't speak up in meetings.... One doesn't want to put the other faculty in the position of feeling bad, but then we become invisible and not able to speak up for ourselves, because we're afraid that we're going to be off-putting to others.

She speaks of self-imposed invisibility and silencing, arising from acute sensitivity to the feelings of non-Montessori faculty; she does not want the more traditional teachers to feel Montessorians are judging or misjudging them.

Another kind of tension arises in Montessori public schools when traditionally educated parents misunderstand the workings of Montessori classrooms and make assumptions that complicate the pedagogical relationships between their children and the Montessori teachers. As Ruth says, "A lot of parents, at least in the public school will come without a lot of knowledge about Montessori." And sometimes administrators seek

to bring Montessori teachers into the mainstream of education by controlling and standardizing what goes on in the schools. In one school I worked in, the end of the year was marred by the principal yelling at the staff that everyone must be the same so we could have peace. And, shocking to the Montessori staff, many non-Montessorians in the room applauded her. Difference rose up as a wall between us.

If the adults in public Montessori schools are to find ways to speak across differences, they need to find ways to talk openly about those differences. Applebee (1996) finds that conflicts over curriculum arise from multiple perspectives about the nature of communities and traditions:

It is important to recognize the many layers of values that are involved in curricular decision. Some of these layers are easy to recognize, because they have been the focus of widespread debate.... Other layers of values are more subtle, embedded in the particular discourse conventions that govern how students will learn to make meaning within a given curriculum. (p. 119)

Applebee offers a vision of transformative curriculum as “participation in ongoing conversations about things that matter” (p. 3), and says that mutual understanding can emerge gradually through immersion in conversations. In Montessori public schools, where a pedagogy of Otherness is embedded in so many encounters between adults, conversations about difference matter. As Applebee notes, learning to listen to one another and reaching out to understand different perspectives can lead to recognition that we are able to communicate without eliminating difference:

Confronting alternative sets of values, different ways of knowing and doing, can be threatening and stressful. Disagreements can be loud and emotions can run high as we learn to listen and understand what is being said from a different perspective. The outcome is likely to be the recognition of difference rather than the achievement of consensus. At their best, teaching and learning in the contact zone between traditions lead to understanding of where the “other” comes from, and the

development of an ability to communicate across that difference.
(Applebee, 1996, p. 125)

As Levinas says, where differences bring us, through face-to-face encounters, beyond our own existential isolation, Otherness opens possibilities for teaching and being taught. Adults in public Montessori schools need to welcome each other into conversations about difference, even though giving and receiving ideas from one another will not always be a peaceful process. Becoming open to difference, and to both teaching each other and being taught, can be possible only if people are willing to participate in conversations that grapple with contradictory perspectives. Adults who would work together for the good of children, “must build bridges *and* mark boundaries; they must reach out *and* resist; they must find points of mutual identification *and* hold fast to their different perspectives” (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2003, p. 246).

Venturing Out of Corner Havens: Between Teachers

A corner that is ‘lived in’ tends to reject and restrain, even to hide, life. The corner becomes a negation of the universe.... When we recall the hours that we have spent in our corners we remember above all silence, the silence of our thoughts.... The corner is ... a sort of half-box, part walls, part door. (Bachelard, 1957/1994, pp. 136-137)

For nearly 50 years, Montessori schools have thrived by staying tucked away in the far corners of teaching traditions in the United States. In these far corners, Montessori teachers find what Bachelard (1957/1994) calls, “a haven, ... a sure place, ... the chamber of being” (p. 137). Corner havens provide places where these teachers can silence their own self-involvement and the noises of the world, in order to attend to the quiet being and becoming of their students. As Levin says, ontological openness can arise from silence:

In order to hear something we must first *give it our silence*.... Cultivating silence, however, is extremely difficult in our time. The more it is needed,

the more it withdraws, giving way to the noises of modern living that cut us off from its teachings of wisdom. (1989, p. 232)

Each teacher who talks with me in this study lives and works side-by-side with an insistent presence of ideas about the good of children that conflict with their own ideals, and each expresses a wish to ward off disturbances that might interrupt their attention to children. This protective instinct can lead to a tendency to withdraw behind classroom doors in order to protect not only their students, but also themselves, from outside disturbance. Behind closed doors, they can cultivate a silence that enables them to hear children. As Trixie says, “Don’t mess around with my classroom.” Anne echoes this thought, “I don’t care what else is happening in the school, as long as my kids and my classroom are not affected.”

However, perhaps Montessori teachers in public schools need to find ways to move out of their protected classroom havens. As Bachelard says, corner havens can reject, restrain and even hide life. They are, he says, only part walls. They are also part door; they also open out. When closed doors open, corner havens no longer reject, restrain and hide life. When classroom doors open, Montessori teachers and traditional teachers meet each other in the hallways and meeting places of public schools. They encounter each other face-to-face in greetings, gestures and conversational moments, and in those greetings, gestures and moments they experience both risks and possibilities. As Applebee says, “Confronting alternative sets of values, different ways of knowing and doing, can be threatening and stressful” (1996, p. 125). But Huebner tells us that educators must risk vulnerability:

We have no choice but to risk ourselves. The choice is whether to risk privately or to build a community that accepts vulnerability and shares the risk. Vulnerability can be endured in a community of care and support,

one in which members take time for telling and listening to the stories of each other's journeys. (1999d, p. 385)

Noddings (2005) expands on the importance of communicating when tensions arise:

Times of tension ... call for people who can meet each other in caring encounters. These are not the times to withdraw. Such withdrawal creates greater distance, an emotional and spiritual separation that may eventually encourage us to put the other outside the ... community. (p. 119)

When communication occurs across difference, teachers not only risk vulnerability; they also open themselves to possibilities. Only when we encounter difference is it possible to "*receive* from the Other beyond the capacity of the I" (Levinas, 1961/2000, p. 51). Margaret longs for her colleagues to talk with her about what she is doing: "What I really would like is some curiosity and maybe backing off on the one-to-one comparison, because I don't think that takes us anywhere." It seems likely that the other teachers would also like some curiosity and freedom from comparison. Noddings encourages educators to take time to listen to each other:

We know that teachers are, with students, the heart of the educational process.... Perhaps we should try more seriously to find out what they are doing, and ... talk with each other about the methods we have chosen, the ends we seek, and the pleasure we experience in knowing each other. (Nodding, 1984/2003, p. 197)

If Montessori teachers come out of their corner havens, they might open themselves to possibilities of kinship that overcome the strangeness of difference. As

Emma says, teaching can be lonely and isolating:

You spend all day long with little people who ... really are helpful and supportive. But you're with them all day, and you really do want to see a grown-up and have a real conversation. And a lot of people don't understand. I used to talk about my work at home a lot. And I just don't do it anymore. I don't talk about it outside of work because I think people just really don't understand what we do.

In encounters with other teachers in public Montessori schools, teachers might find kindred spirits and possibilities for understanding and being understood. As Anne says, joy can be found in meeting colleagues face-to-face: “I love having a really big staff. Lots of personalities. Lots of sharing, personal sharing.” Trixie agrees: “It’s just fun to have somebody to talk to.”

But Sergiovanni (2007b) suggests there needs to be more than friendliness in encounters between teachers. He says that collegiality is even more important than congeniality:

Collegiality refers to the existence of high levels of collaboration among teachers, and is characterized by mutual respect, shared work values, cooperation, and specific conversations about teaching and learning.... When collegiality is high, a strong professional culture held together by shared work norms emerges in the school. (p. 121)

When they enter public schools, Montessorians move forth from a position on the edges of educational traditions, closer to the mainstream. They cannot take for granted their Montessori perspectives as they move out of their havens. In public schools they are in a public position, and here they have a professional responsibility to talk about their understandings of what teaching means, and to try to make it possible for others to understand the life they are trying to live with children. In collaboration with each other, Montessori teachers and other educators in public schools might find not only friendship, but mutual opportunities for professional growth.

Margaret expresses well the complexities of Montessori public school teachers’ professional position in public schools when she tells about Montessori colleagues being afraid that if they speak at staff meetings they might offend. If they are not sensitive to possibilities that other teachers might find their expressions of difference “off-putting,” the other teachers might be the ones to retreat behind their classroom doors or applaud

when a principal calls for uniformity. Nevertheless, Montessori teachers need to keep talking, and keep meeting other teachers in caring and collegial encounters. They need to try to close the distance by reaching across boundaries. They need to ask about what other teachers are doing, and talk about what they are doing. They need to risk vulnerability in order to create bridges that will encourage the creation of collaborative communities.

Lawrence-Lightfoot believes collaboration is made possible when opportunities are created “for wandering, improvisational talk that often leads to new insights and new discoveries” (2003, p. 219). Huebner (1999d) also believes that opportunities for teachers to talk with one another are essential. He says that in conversation, teacher-colleagues help each other recognize and reflect on their values:

To teach because we are called is to feel a need for colleagues, companions, friends with whom we can communicate and search for new values and meaning.... We need people who listen and share conversation about what we are doing, how the young people of this year differ from those of past years, about the developments in our traditions.... People who listen to us and to whom we listen can help in telling our story, so that we can more readily recognize our own changing values and meanings. (p. 385)

In conversations with one another, both Montessorians and traditional teachers might find new ways to keep their hearts fresh and open to the experiences of being-with children. Teachers should take time to explore together the terrain of silences and invisibility that separate adults in public Montessori schools. In listening to the narratives that shape each others' understandings, and the hopes and fears these stories express, they might find new appreciation and understanding of the terrain of teaching.

Crossroad Journeys: Between Teachers and Children's Families

To survive the borderland, ... we must “be a crossroads.”... The borderland ... is a place where each person plays multiple roles.... People

are both strangers and familiar. They are the crossroads, existing and acting without borders. I believe that the borderland is a wonderful metaphor for parent-teacher meeting places.... Each parent and teacher *is* the crossroads, offering multiple paths and choices, presenting ways out to new places and uncharted territory. (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2003, p. 247)

Lawrence-Lightfoot calls on parents and teachers to “be a crossroads.” The *Oxford English Dictionary* (2003) says a crossroad is a byroad between main roads, and as a figurative expression a crossroad is a moment of decision, a critical turning-point. Being a crossroad in teacher/parent conversations carries a sense of connecting and making decisions, but also of traveling the byroads that are between main roads. In Montessori public schools, the crossroads often travel between different ways of thinking about teaching and learning. Trixie notes that Montessori classrooms can feel like foreign territory to children’s families:

It’s totally foreign to them.... They really need ... guidelines: “This is what you’re seeing, this is why you’re seeing it. This is what we hope to see, sometimes these are the departures from what we want to see.” But they need to know this is what we’re all about and that’s why we’re trying to do the things that we’re doing.

On the crossroads that stretch between them, parents and teachers meet each other in their hopes and concerns for children. Conversations between teachers and parents are fraught with underlying currents of culture and emotion, “shaped by ... autobiographical stories and by the broader cultural and historical narratives that inform their identities, their values, and their sense of place in the world” (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2003, p. 3). Montessori teachers have chosen a way-of-life that is off the main roads of education, but this is not always true of the parents in public Montessori schools. As Ruth says, “A lot of parents, at least in the public school, will come without a lot of knowledge about Montessori.”

Being crossroads in the borderlands between children's families and teachers means journeying together on byroads that connect parents, teachers and children through a wandering openness in which all are learners and all are teachers. Conversations between parents and teachers are more formal and laden with personal meaning and cultural significance than the casual conversations that occur between teachers who greet and converse with each other in hallways and meeting places. Parent-teacher conversations can be very tense. Emma says, "Parents can be very difficult;" and as Trixie expresses her perspective on parent-teacher encounters during our group conversation, all heads around the table nod agreement:

It can be really hard.... Some of them come in with no notion whatsoever but others come in with notions; and they don't really understand what comes behind the things that go on in the classroom, including the freedom aspect of it.... They're mostly concerned about the academic part. They want their kid to be advanced. They want their kid to have all the opportunities that way.

Lawrence-Lightfoot says that parent-teacher conferences often make teachers feel "uncertain, exposed, and defensive," but she also expresses the parents' point of view:

To parents, their child is ... the one who arouses their deepest passions and greatest vulnerabilities, the one who inspires their fiercest advocacy and protection.... Their productive engagement with the teacher is essential for the child's learning and growth, and for the parents' peace of mind. I believe that for parents there is no ... arena where they feel more exposed than at the ritual conferences. (2003, p. xxi)

In conversations with parents, teachers can provide connections between different perspectives in two ways. They can listen receptively and ask questions about the parents' points-of-view; and they can describe what they do in the classroom, and why. Bridging differences through open-ended, care-ful conversations can create crossroads that open possibilities of mutual trust and concern. Bollnow (1989) finds that trust is

foundational in pedagogic relations. It is the child's trust he explores, but his description illuminates the significance of parent-teacher trust:

When children ... venture out into this world, they do it at first at the hands of their parents, trusting all the while in their parents' ready help and power.... Later the familiar conditions change when the teacher, as a new and more highly respected person in the child's eyes, takes over the place of the parent.... What is required of the parent or teacher here? Their task is to guide the child ... in order to slowly and carefully allow him or her to leave behind the absoluteness of trust in one concrete other person, and to guide to a new state, no longer bound to a single person. (pp. 12-13)

When parents and teachers trust one another, children's trust in their parents can more easily transfer to the teacher. When parents and teachers work together to bridge the differences in their perspectives, they create a place of safety and security in which children can venture forth trustingly from the enfolding love of family into the broader world represented by teachers and schools.

Conversations can create crossroads, but these crossroads need to be marked and tended. The teachers who converse with me all speak about the importance of establishing trust with parents through conversations; but they also speak about parent education as an important venue for gaining parents' trust in their way of teaching. As Ruth says:

You need to have parents' ... trust.... Parents needs to know what they're getting before they get involved and there needs to be a commitment.

Lawrence-Lightfoot expresses a difference between the connections made during parent-teacher conversations and those marked and tended in parent education. A Montessori teacher who participates in Lawrence-Lightfoot's study explains that "she reveals her values and speaks about family issues that she believes are crucial for the optimal emotional and intellectual development of their children" in parent education workshops:

She ... makes a clear distinction between conversations that take place in parent-teacher conferences – in which she is unlikely to take a position or preach a set of values – and the exchanges in the parent workshops, where she claims an ideological position and hopes that in making her values transparent she will encourage parents to scrutinize their own. These parent education efforts help us to realize that effective work with families across the boundaries of race, culture, and class cannot be contained in twice-yearly ritual conferences. (2003, p. 143)

Anne describes parent education using the same metaphor I was taught in my teacher-training course. She calls parent education a triangle:

So there's the triangle. You have the triangle of the staff and then the parents and then the students. And in the heart of it all is the philosophy.

The triangle is the sturdiest geometrical construction. Its shape brings stability to all kinds of constructions. The parent-child-teacher triangle provides a sturdy framework for encouraging trust, but this framework is strongest when teachers spend time talking about the philosophy at the heart of their teaching practices.

Tending to the communication framework through parent education is one important way to reach across boundaries of difference that complicate the shared journey. But unless teachers also take the time to wander byroads together with parents, listening to parents' values and concerns as well as talking with them about their own perspectives, the byroads probably will not form reliable connections between families and teachers. Teachers might not always be aware of the meanings of race, culture and class and assumptions about learning in the lives of their students' families, but their invisible presence is nevertheless powerful. Through open-ended and open-hearted conversations, though, differences can be bridged and teachers and parents together can create a safe place for children to learn and grow. As Heidegger (1993a) says:

A space is something that has been made room for, something that has been freed..... Space is, in essence, that for which room has been made....

The space allowed by the bridge contains many places variously near or far from the bridge. (pp. 356-357)

When trust grows between teachers and families, it is this trust that truly becomes the reliable crossroads on which students can travel safely from the nearness and familiarity of their homes into the world of school and beyond.

Reshaping the Landscape: Between Teachers and Administrators

A space that knows planned curriculum and live(d) curriculum... is an inspirited site of being and becoming.... The word *curriculum* ... feels choked, out of breath, caught in a landscape wherein “curriculum” as master signifier is restricted to planned curriculum with all its supposed splendid instrumentalism.... We seek your guiding hand in reshaping and reconstituting the landscape such that in generative third spaces earth’s rhythms can be heard, at times in thunderous rolls and at other times in fingertip whispers. (Aoki, 2005g, pp. 420-423)

Aoki’s call to art educators to reshape and reconstitute the landscape of curriculum can also be heard as a call to all educators whose teaching lives are lived in “third spaces” in-between planned and lived curriculum. In public schools, Montessori teachers, like many other teachers, try to create classroom environments that are inspirited sites of “being and becoming” for both their students and themselves. But as they speak about their interactions with school system administrators, each teacher expresses feeling, at times, more “choked, out of breath” than inspirited. The relationships between school leaders and teachers is in some ways the most complicated site of difference in public Montessori schools, because administrators hold power over teachers. Not only do they control critical components of the teachers’ work, such as student placement, schedules and supplies, but as Andrew says, “The observation process in public school ... is very much tied into your job. For some people, that can be a really stressful scenario.”

Sergiovanni (2007a) expresses something of the constricting landscape that sometimes characterizes teacher interactions with public school administrators:

Current school practices ... are considered to be unquestioned truths. Things are done in a certain way because they are supposed to be done that way.... Teachers who teach the way they are supposed to get good evaluations.... Teachers who cooperate get recognition.... Relationships are constructed for us by others and become codified into a system of hierarchies, roles, and role expectations. (pp. 101-103)

In schools characterized by heavy-handed administrative control, teachers are threatened with loss of a stable sense of who they are in the classroom. Such control weakens autonomy and individuals' sense of responsibility as institutional roles reshape and constrain personal identity. Greene (1978) expresses the erosive power of such a loss of autonomy:

An individual who is part of a crowd becomes anonymous; the sense of responsibility is weakened; autonomy erodes. In such a state, we are hardly likely to engage in the kinds of perceptual and cognitive activities needed for ordering experience and making sense of the world. We are unlikely to frame the significant questions that move human beings to go in search of meaning, to pursue themselves, to learn. (p. 199)

The Montessori teachers who spoke with me express a belief that they need to observe and reflect upon the meanings found in the work of each individual child in their charge. They judge their success as teachers by the sensitivity of their observations, questions and responses. Leadership that constrains autonomy makes Montessori teachers less able to “frame the significant questions that move human beings to go in search of meaning.”

Often, though, public Montessori school principals begin their careers as traditional teachers, and they bring traditional ways of thinking about how teachers should teach and learners should learn to their leadership practices. They expect things to be “done in a certain way because they are supposed to be done that way” (Sergiovanni, 2007a, p. 101). When my principal yelled in outrage that everyone must be the same so

we could have peace, and traditional teachers applauded her, they seemed to feel they were standing up for a deeply felt system of values. Unfortunately, for the Montessori teachers who left this meeting feeling hurt and angry, this particular belief structure has the effect of choking off possibilities. Where are the spaces in which teachers and school leaders might encounter each other face-to-face as both teacher and taught, when leaders reject difference and demand uniformity?

Greene (1978) urges educators to recognize and value creativity, individual meaning making, and possibilities of personal transformation and activism:

Each individual must somehow be liberated to transform her or his own reality, to become aware of her or his encounters and of what it means to be present in the world.... Only human beings can experience incompleteness, the gap between what is and what might be. Only human beings can fill the gap by moving out in search of meaning and transcendence, moving out to change their world. The focus must remain on the human being, on his or her achievement, his or her choice. (p. 209)

When administrators create space for each individual teacher to search for meaning and to “transform her or his own reality,” they encourage the kind of autonomy that leaves room for teachers to experience “the gap between what is and what might be.” Henderson and Hawthorne (2000) say that management paradigms traditionally value cooperation and compliance, but they, too, believe it is important to value both teachers’ individual learning, and also collegial learning:

The traditional management paradigm equates competence with compliance. A democratic learning community, on the other hand, can produce “extraordinary results” ... because the emphasis changes ... to creating and sustaining inquiry relationships.... Leading such a community ... must focus on developing caring relationships within the school, and challenge classroom, building, program, district, community, and societal structures that inhibit democratic community development. (p. 18)

Henderson and Hawthorne believe that inquiry relationships among teachers lead to improved learning for students. They say that if a community is to sustain collegial learning, both administrators and teachers must focus both on developing caring relationships within the school, and on challenging external structures that inhibit community development. In calling for this dual focus, they address themselves both to school leaders and to teachers. They believe that all educators share responsibility for creating learning communities that are both caring and critical:

Transformative collegial leaders are involved in collaborative problem solving.... They model creative, caring, critical, and contemplative reflective inquiry.... They accept differing ideas about professional growth.... They are skilled at considering multiple truths and are willing to manage conflicts. They are committed to dialogue with diverse others, understanding that such diversity includes educators rooted in mainstream curriculum philosophy. (p. 60)

Montessori teachers working in public schools can be transformative collegial leaders if they can listen receptively to the goals of their school systems but also question and, at times, challenge these goals. They can seek common ground by opening and sustaining conversations with school leaders, whether in fingertip whispers or thunderous rolls (Aoki, 2005g). In spite of the power differential, teachers need to hold onto their own knowledge and understandings of what it means to be a Montessori teacher in conversations with administrators. At the same time, as collegial and caring human beings, they need to be responsive to school leaders' priorities and values. They can approach encounters with school leaders as opportunities to engage together in open-hearted questioning of what it means to be both a Montessori teacher and also a public school teacher. As Gadamer (1960/2003) tells us:

Only a person who has questions can have knowledge, but questions include the antitheses of yes and no, of being like this and being like that. Only because knowledge is dialectical in this comprehensive sense can

there be a “dialectic” that explicitly makes its object the antitheses of yes and no. (p. 365)

Bachelard (1957/1994), too, expresses the divisive capacity of “yes and no:”

Outside and inside form a dialectic of division, the obvious geometry of which blinds us as soon as we bring it into play in metaphorical domains. It has the sharpness of the dialectics of *yes* and *no*, which decides everything. Unless one is careful, it is made into a basis of images that govern all thoughts of positive and negative.... Beyond what is expressed in their formal opposition lies opposition and hostility between the two. (pp. 211-212)

Common ground lies in the “antitheses of yes and no.” If teachers can question what they do not yet understand without hostility, they might begin to forge an identity that includes both their own perspective and appreciation of school leaders’ points-of-view.

Administrators, on the other hand, by virtue of being representatives of a school system that invites Montessorians in, ought to try to understand and appreciate the world-view of Montessori teachers. Montessori public school leaders, can support teachers’ work by listening to the “fingertip whispers” (Aoki, 2005g) of teachers seeking ways to express their search for meaning. Administrators, in their roles as instructional leaders are more likely to be able to “teach” Montessori teachers what is necessary for the well-being of the school if they first reach out in caring ways to ask about Montessori practices, rather than demanding compliance with traditional paradigms. As Gadamer says, authority arises from knowledge:

The authority of persons is ultimately based not on the subjection and abdication of reason but on an act of acknowledgment and knowledge.... This is connected with the fact that authority cannot actually be bestowed, but is earned.... Authority has to do not with obedience but rather with knowledge. (1960/2003, p. 279)

When school leaders insist that Montessori teachers comply with incongruent practices, they shut down avenues for conversations that might lead to mutual

acknowledgement of authority. Emma, for example, expresses frustration with administrative conversations that focus exclusively on achieving traditional results: “People for the most part don’t really ask what’s going on. They kind of indicate what the results should be.” She wishes school leaders would not only say what results they need, but also listen to her and recognize the work she does:

Just a little recognition.... As opposed to, “Can you try this? Or why don’t you do that?” This kind of external assertion of what should be happening as opposed to ..., “Tell us about it, and then let’s see what we can do.”

Emma wants recognition and she wants school leaders to listen. She does not want someone to tell her what to try, because she feels her building administrators do not really understand Montessori:

While administrators in the school building want to recognize the challenge of teaching the ... Montessori elementary curriculum, I think they’re ... far removed from the classroom and the day-to-day lesson planning and what it takes to balance the [state] standards with following the child.

The recognition Montessori teachers want, though, might be more than many traditionally trained administrators can offer. Emma wants recognition that comes from classroom experiences. She values active learning for her students, and has a hard time trusting knowledge that does not come from hands-on engagement. She further explains her feelings:

Their understanding of Montessori is largely theory, and not practice. It does kind of run through my head from time to time that I know that those people couldn’t step into a classroom and do my job. And I always kind of feel that that creates a distance.

Every teacher echoes Emma’s sense that traditionally oriented administrators are too far removed from their day-to-day experiences to understand what their work is like.

Trixie says, “There wasn’t in our principal’s case, ... really any understanding of Montessori at all,” and Andrew says:

[The county] said “yes” to a Montessori charter school; what they heard was “charter school.” They didn’t have any idea what they were getting into in terms of Montessori, which is just different than traditional.

Both Andrew and Ruth talk about classroom observations as an example of their sense that traditionally oriented school leaders do not understand Montessori. As Andrew says, “The public school observation format ... doesn’t quite match what’s looked for in a Montessorian.” Margaret expresses her feelings by saying she simply wishes administrators would read about Montessori: “I tried to give [the new principal] a copy of *Montessori Today*. And she told me that ... she didn’t have time to read it.” Several teachers say they wish their school leaders were actually Montessorians. All the teachers express agreement with Bolman and Deal (2001), who say, “Leaders cannot ... lead to places they’ve never been” (p. 106).

Although Applebee (1996) agrees that the important understandings arise from knowledge-in-action, he suggests that learners who are new to a domain need to be invited into full participation in a conversation:

A novice entering any conversation will only gradually come to understand all of the nuances of the discussions under way.... This is the way we gain knowledge-in action in any arena, through gradual immersion in new conversations rather than by standing alongside and being told about them. (p. 123)

When their school leaders are not familiar with Montessori principles, teachers might try to remember that gradual immersion, over time, will likely lead to understandings.

Anne, expresses an idea similar to Applebee’s notion of “gradual immersion in new conversations,” as she talks about how she tries to help create a public school where Montessori feels at home, through “just constantly talking about ... the school that would

be a perfect school for me.” Of the six teachers, Anne, who has been a Montessori teacher for 33 years, and who openly embraces many of the ideas her school system introduces, is also the teacher who most actively engages with school leaders when she disagrees with a decision that effects her class. If, like Anne, teachers are open to school system ideas and values, strong in standing up for Montessori ideals and practices, and willing to keep talking and listening, they might journey, with school leaders, to a space in which they can recognize and listen to each other.

Montessori teachers can work with school leaders to reshape and reconstitute the landscape of public Montessori schools both by recognizing and listening to the values of school leaders, and by talking about their own ideas. In the spaces between traditional school practices and Montessori teaching practices, they might find “an inspirited site of being and becoming” (Aoki, 2005g), where teachers and administrators meet each other, face-to-face, in teaching and learning relationships. By entering into conversations about difference, even where such conversations require risk-taking, teachers might begin to build bridges with administrators, grapple with contradictory perspectives, and find common ground.

Administering in Public Montessori Schools: The Largeness of Small Things

To administer is to minister, to serve.... What is meant by an administrator ministering to teachers? One who ministers is concerned about the life of the other and recognizes that the work, the calling, of that person is significant and meaningful. The work of the administrator, therefore, is to “listen” someone else into consciousness, to accept teaching problems as occasions for new growth and development. (Huebner, 1999d, pp. 385-386)

I have looked at ways Montessori teachers in public schools can help reshape the landscape of their teaching lives by venturing out of their corner havens to converse about differences, and have suggested that school leaders should create safe spaces that

encourage teachers to enter into such conversations. Now I turn to an exploration of ways that school administrators can support these teachers in their work of creating inspired sites of “being and becoming.”

Huebner calls on administrators to minister to teachers, not only by listening to them, but also by recognizing that their lives and work are significant and meaningful. By bringing notions of ministering and administering together, Huebner brings us into a densely layered and textured space that illuminates the complexity of leadership in public Montessori schools. Minister derives from the Anglo-Norman word *menistrer*, which means, as he suggests, to serve. In an earlier sense, though, the word minister has many layers of meanings. The Latin word *ministrare* refers not only to acting as a servant, but also to providing, controlling, administering medicines, and serving as a minister of religion (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 2003). Huebner draws upon the meaning of ministering as providing; he says ministering means providing concern for and recognition of the life and work of “the other.” When he suggests the work of administrators is “to ‘listen’ someone else into consciousness,” he also evokes an image of administering as healing through awakening or ministering to the spirit. Huebner does not talk about administering as controlling, but that meaning, too, is carried in the word’s history.

Looking even further back into the history of the word brings us deeper into the complexity of the notion of administering as a form of ministering. The word’s Indo-European root, *mei*, means small, as in mince, minute, minutia, diminish, minor, minus, minuscule, and minimum (*American Heritage Dictionary*, 2000). Listening to these ancient roots and relations, I hear administering as focusing on small things, details that

can at times diminish conversations and bring them to a place where teachers might feel “choked, out of breath” (Aoki, 2005g). Greene (1995) describes the constricting effect of administrative minutia as she contrasts looking at the world small, as though from a distance, with seeing the world up close and big:

To see things or people small, one chooses to see from a detached point of view, to watch behaviors from the perspective of a system, to be concerned with trends and tendencies rather than the intentionality and concreteness of everyday life. To see things or people big, one ... must see from the point of view of the participant in the midst of what is happening. (p. 10)

Greene believes that educators need to see schools both small and large, but finds that on the whole it is “the possibility of looking at things as if they could be otherwise, ... looking at things large, that might move us on into ‘geographies and landscapes still to be explored’” (p. 16).

A Landscape of Small Work with Great Love

Bolman and Deal (2001) express the notion of administration as looking-at-things-large in a slightly different way, by exploring the largeness of small acts of caring. They quote Mother Teresa, who said the secret of her leadership was “small work with great love,” and they agree that authentic leadership grows from reaching out in loving ways to others:

Caring begins with knowing – it requires listening, understanding, and accepting. It progresses through a deepening sense of appreciation, respect, and ultimately, love. Love is a willingness to reach out.... We experience a sense of unity and delight in those voluntary, human exchanges that mold “the soul of community.” (pp. 108-109)

Mother Teresa’s naming of “small work with great love” is no different from Greene’s idea of looking-large at the world. Both express a sense of the value of attending, in an up close and personal way, to other people’s lived experiences. When people reach out to

each other through small acts of kindness, they create welcoming spaces where differences can be accepted. I think of Anne's sense of strangeness when she first enters public schools. Her sense of strangeness is overcome as she shares projects and conversation with parents and other teachers. As Huebner says, "Trust, patience and conversation provided by one who cares or loves provides the time, support, and language necessary to bring discordant feelings, thoughts and actions into new unity" (1999d, p. 364). By tending to the sense of community that grows from small acts of listening and recognition, school leaders might begin to move, with Montessori teachers, into Greene's "geographies and landscapes still to be explored."

The teachers who converse with me embrace the ideal of creating community by supporting one another. Trixie, Emma and Anne, for example, all tell stories of reaching out to new Montessori teachers who are encountering the strangeness of public Montessori schools for the first time. Trixie tells about sharing ideas for lessons, and Anne says all the more experienced teachers who work with her do everything they can to help new teachers:

We did everything we possibly could to help them. We have a lady now, ... and she's really struggling.... I keep going to her saying, "How is everything going? I'm here. What do you need to do? How can we help you?"

Emma's story expresses anxious concern that the support she and other experienced teachers are able to provide is not enough:

You have to learn running in the school system. You don't get mentored. You just have to sort of hit the ground and be able to do it, or you're out.... We have some new teachers who are having a hard time making the transition to public school from private school Montessori, and the different demands. That's been a big worry for all of us pretty much all the time.

In these stories, the teachers express understanding of a need for listening and small acts of kindness, but they also question what might be done to create a more supportive community. Similarly, Sergiovanni (2007a) asks, “How can we become more of a professional community where we care about each other and help each other to be and learn?” (p. 105).

Public school administrators can assume that most Montessori teachers have a sense of strangeness and insecurity in the public school world, because teachers who trust traditional education, do not choose an alternative to it. Something about traditional education causes Montessorians to turn away from it. When they enter public Montessori schools, they are returning to a place they chose to leave when they became Montessori teachers. They enter the domain of public schools either to bring Montessori to more children, or because they want or need the better pay and benefits provided by public schools. They do not come into public schools because they want to be reabsorbed into the mainstream. Montessori teaching is a kind of pilgrimage in two directions. It is a journey toward an ideal of following the child, but it is also a journey away from traditional ways of being-with children. Casey’s description of place alienation provides an image that metaphorically expresses something of the uneasiness Montessori teachers experience as they adjust to being in public schools:

It is evident that our innermost sense of personal identity ... deeply reflects our implacement. It follows that threats to this implacement are also threats to our entire sense of well-being.... Given this reciprocity of person and place, place-alienation is itself two-way: I from it, it from me. When caught up in this double-sided otherness, I feel, almost literally, “beside myself.” I feel myself to be other than myself. (p. 307)

Administrators in public Montessori schools might find ways to help teachers overcome their sense of “double-sided otherness,” simply by recognizing that a feeling

like the place alienation Casey describes is possible, especially when Montessori teachers venture outside the safe haven of their classrooms into the hallways and meeting places of public schools. School leaders might try to understand that when they call upon Montessori teachers to be “other than myself” they can create a crisis of identity. Such a crisis of identity can interrupt teachers’ abilities to give full and careful attention to the well-being of their students; it also can interrupt their attention to the well-being of the school and school system. Just as teachers can create trusty crossroads between home life and school life for children, school leaders can provide trusty crossroads that connect Montessori teachers with the needs and values of public school systems as these teachers reach for a sense of who they might be in public schools.

Sergiovanni expresses the importance of relational trust for all teachers. He finds that when administrators establish trust, teachers are better able to come out of their safe-havens and collaborate with each other:

Relational trust is the antidote to the vulnerability that is likely to be experienced ... in schools. Regardless of how deep and thorough exchanges are among people ..., without trusting relationships, these exchanges likely would encourage self-protection and holding back, severely limiting the capacity for collaboration. (2007d, p. 159)

Administrators who attend to relational trust create a greater capacity for collaboration with Montessorians. Bollnow (1989) expresses a belief that the “overarching harmony and disharmony in their relationship to each other” (p. 6) determines whether or not relational trust will develop between teacher and learner, and he believes that teachers must attend to pedagogic atmosphere in order to find harmony with learners. He finds that “within the concept of the pedagogical atmosphere there is hidden a foundational, still undifferentiated, but therefore all-encompassing view within which the concretely and actively grounded pedagogical relation can develop itself” (p. 7):

I take the term *pedagogical atmosphere* to mean all those fundamental emotional conditions and sentient human qualities ... which form the basis for every pedagogical relationship.... The term *atmosphere* usually makes one think of the fleeting and delicate air hovering over the solid ground, somewhat like a shifting breath of wind or a guileful surface glare which covers and distorts the true relationships underneath. I want to be careful and stay clear of these kinds of references in order to come to grips with the foundational significance and importance of our subject. (Bollnow, 1989, p. 5)

As he says, atmosphere is hard to measure, ineffable, shifting; but it is not hard to perceive. The pedagogical atmosphere between administrators and teachers can be friendly or gloomy, peaceful or resentful, trusting or suspicious.

Bollnow contrasts two extremes of educational thought. One attends to the learner's natural growth process, "letting grow." The other sees learning as "a kind of making or producing" (p. 7). When seen as making or producing an end product, he says, education is not dependent on atmosphere: "Even when I am in a bad mood I can accomplish my goal. I only need to pull myself together" (p. 7). Sometimes in public Montessori schools, administrators talk a lot about curriculum timetables and testing students to measure acquisition of knowledge and skills. If this were the schools' only focus, questions of atmosphere, harmony and trust might be unimportant. However, this study shows that public Montessori schools are in-between places where notions of education as producing achievement exist side-by-side and face-to-face with notions of education as "letting grow" and letting learn.

Reynolds (2003) finds that such in-between places can be creative and productive:

Becoming, new ways of thinking, always proceed from the 'in-between.' This is where lines of flight take shape. The possibilities for creative curriculum thought for one, lie in those multiplicities, which emerge in the 'in-between.' This shows not what curriculum thought should **BE** but how **AND** can be productive for it, ... seeing the possibilities in the space in-between because multiplicity lies in the **AND**. (pp. 94-95)

Hope, trust and joy are among the lines of flight that can take shape in the in-between spaces of public Montessori classrooms. Public school administrators, whose jobs require that they focus on testable achievement as an important outcome of education, can still also acknowledge the importance of small things that create an atmosphere of hope, trust and joy, and encourage “letting grow.” Bollnow’s description of what children need for healthy growth is also an apt description of the kind of atmosphere that might help teachers develop trusting relationships with administrators: “A reflective sense of the Good, a sense of the meaning of being human, a sense of hope for ... personal becoming” (p. 11).

Administrators, when they provide instructional leadership for Montessori teachers in public schools, enter into a pedagogical relation with the teachers. From a Montessorian point-of-view, pedagogical relations are predicated on trust and respect; Montessorians believe that the teacher’s trust and respect enhances a learner’s efforts to learn and grow. Bollnow expresses a similar belief, saying that the trust of an educator “strengthens the positive faculties which he or she presumes present” (p. 40). One way administrators can establish trust and a feeling of security is by reaching out with small acts of support, and opportunities for conversation. Knowing school leaders listen to them and recognize the value of their work might encourage teachers to step out of their corner havens. Expressions of support and concern create trust and ease anxiety and tension.

Emma says of her principal:

We are largely supported.... Supported with parents, supported with students. The school is really a very easy, safe place to go. The principal trusts the teachers. The parents trust the principal. The parents trust the teachers. It’s just this big circle.

Conversely, when administrators and teachers do not trust one another, an atmosphere of discouragement can take hold. Where adults sense threat or encroaching power from other adults, trusting relationships probably will not develop.

Sergiovanni finds that administrators who want to create supportive, collegial communities need to include room for difference, as well as centers of harmony:

Few leaders find their efforts at community building to be models of perfect harmony.... Wise leaders know, however, that schools need centers of harmony that contain enough of what is important and shared to hold things together. At the same time, they encourage differences in how the center of ideas is embodied in practice.... Creating centers of harmony is the work of a bonding community. Linking differences and learning is the work of a bridging community. (2007d, p. 164)

Sergiovanni (2007a) suggests a number of ways to create centers of harmony in schools.

He says that shared understandings grow by building on feelings of kinship, shared place, shared ideas, and shared memories:

Relationships within a community of mind are based ... on understandings about what is shared and on the emerging web of obligations to embody that which is shared. Relationships within a community by kinship are based ... on understandings similar to those found within the family. Relationships within communities of place are based ... on understandings about how members will live their lives together as neighbors.... Enduring understandings suggests a fourth form of community – community of memory. (pp. 105-106)

Communities of place and communities of memory occur naturally over time in schools, where acts of connection and caring in hallways and meeting places create a sense of neighborly affinity. Trust and feelings of kinship grow through small acts of congeniality and opportunities to enjoy each other's company.

Creating harmony through congeniality and shared community experiences, however, is only part of what Sergiovanni suggests. He also says that commonalities must be explored, and differences must be linked. My study suggests that efforts to

standardize and control teaching practices will not create community in public Montessori schools. The Montessori teachers who spoke with me tell of walls going up when they feel threatened in their efforts to attend to the individual being and becoming of their students. Sergiovanni suggests that administrators should try to link differences, rather than trying to eliminate them. People who understand, talk about, and accept differences can experience Otherness as a safe and welcoming place.

Rodriguez (1982), in autobiographical musings about the sounds of public and private language, finds that “Intimacy is not trapped within words. It passes through words” (p. 39). Montessorians in public schools are called upon to frame their understandings of teaching and learning in a language very different from the language they use within the community of Montessorians. They struggle to express their private insights about children’s growth and learning in the public vocabulary of learning standards and tests. Perhaps administrators can bridge these private and public spheres by drawing upon a shared commitment to working for the good of children, however differently teachers name and think about that good. The intimacy of shared understandings might grow over time as teachers have opportunities to engage in conversations about how they name and think about their teaching experiences.

The complicated work of building bridges and creating centers of harmony in public Montessori schools requires time and patience. Trust and collegiality can grow over time through small acts of listening and recognition. If administrators can reach for “points of mutual identification” (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2003), and embrace and honor differences, “small work with great love” might create the trusting atmosphere that can support the bonding and bridging of pedagogical communities.

Butterfly Wings in Pedagogical Ecosystems

Small, initial decisions are often important.... If the significance of the little details is recognized in teaching and learning, the small things that occur alongside, before, after, and in-between learning and teaching will also begin to matter. Pedagogy does not exist as separate from the details of the life of schools, classrooms, and the students to whom it is directed.... The tiny things matter. (Laidlaw, 2004, p. 14)

Laidlaw (2004), looking at pedagogy through the lens of complexity science, sees large effects in tiny details of school environments: “Tiny decisions, setting up this structure and not that one, have the capacity for creating immense differences in the eventual dynamics of the classroom” (p. 12). Her notion of attending to the effects of small things is very much like Greene’s idea of looking at things large. Greene says they if we look at school life up-close, the significance of small things in the lives of teachers and students can be seen large. Laidlaw, too, suggests looking up-close at the complex and unexpected interactions between tiny details of school life and pedagogical conditions in schools:

The butterfly effect, or notion of subtle influence ... demonstrates that what might seem to be random, or ‘chaotic’ in the traditional sense, follows a kind of rich, creative, unpredictable order. Particular patterns emerge, over time, in response to small perturbations, or changes in the system.... Children (and teachers) respond in subtle, and sometimes not-so-subtle ways to aspects of their surroundings that may remain, for the most part, outside of awareness.... Attending to such details ... can help to transform a learning environment if particular pedagogical adjustments are made in response to emerging conditions. (pp. 9-10)

Laidlaw’s exploration of the effect of subtle influences on classroom life is reflected in the words of my conversational partners. When I ask what experiences support or challenge their Montessori teaching practices, the stories they tell center around details in the day-to-day routines of classroom life. They talk about small things, like the importance of long blocks of uninterrupted work time, and the helpfulness of

materials and supplies. Emma, for example, expresses appreciation of the Montessori materials as tools that help her plan and present lessons. Andrew, too, feels supported “having the proper materials in the classroom,” and Anne feels grateful for all the supplies that help her in her work: “I really am so happy to have supplies.”

Emma elaborates on the importance of details like resources and scheduling as she reflects on her interactions with school administrators. Although she values the trusting atmosphere in her school, she says it is not entirely enough:

The sense that you're trusted makes you feel incredibly responsible for things that are outside of your control, and overwhelmed, which then makes you feel unsupported. The trust is so kind of hands off that when you do say that you need something or that you have a problem, or the master schedule's not really supporting what we need to do in our classrooms, there's an assumption that you can just sort of handle it.... What we get is more trust that “You can do it!”

She says that even more than trust, “I want more resources and more support.” She illustrates what she means by telling a story about interruptions to the three hour work period:

The school made a choice to ... let the upper elementary Montessori teachers just deal with the fact that every single morning, right in the middle of the work period, groups of nine students get up and leave your room to go to band and orchestra.

Margaret, too, recalls the unsettling effect of a fragmented schedule:

Just as we're getting out the complicated racks and tubes and we're setting it all up, “Okay it's time to get up, time to go to music!” ... They drag their feet.... They're telling us, “You know what, I was just getting into that and now you're telling me it's time to go.”... Smaller chunks of work time ... really interfere with the way that our rooms are set up, exploring, investigation, discovery.... It actually works to the detriment of the child. They're anticipating that they're going to be cut off.

School leaders can support Montessori practices by listening to teachers who tell them about the large effects of small administrative decisions on their classroom lives.

Montessori teachers focus on the effect that small things have on their students' learning, because they think of their classrooms as prepared learning environments, like little ecosystems, where everything is interdependent. They scrutinize the arrangement of furniture, lighting, sounds, the sequence and presentation of materials on shelves, daily routines, and personal interactions with children. Each small detail is examined in light of how it might help or hinder student growth and development.

Lillard (1996) describes Montessori classrooms as prepared environments:

The prepared environment is always a place of simplicity, beauty, and order.... It is the totality of the prepared environment to be explored and acted upon by the children that is primary: the other children, the teacher, ... and the careful arrangement of the classroom. (pp. 21-22)

In their prepared environments, Montessori teachers look for the large effects of small things in the classroom. Laidlaw, too, uses the language of environments to talk about the effects of small decisions on learning:

Living beings take in and respond to information from their immediate surroundings and co-emerge with this context.... How a teacher (or administrator) influences, structures, and crafts aspects of this environment becomes significant.... Teaching, when there is acknowledgment of how complex systems function, becomes more a matter of "occasioning" learning than "prescribing" it. Learning ecologies can be developed to respond to and emerge from learners' interests, needs, and intentions. (pp. 11-12)

For Montessori teachers, the prepared learning environment includes not only physical preparation such as arrangement of furniture and provision of beautiful hands-on materials and supplies; it also includes preparation of calm and supportive routines, including possibilities of unrushed, unmeasured time. Lillard (1996) underscores the importance of uninterrupted time for children's learning:

Once children become self-directed, they do their best work when allowed a three-hour uninterrupted work cycle.... Montessori schools that do not maintain this unbroken work cycle compromise the results.... The

protection of the children's right not to be interrupted when productively occupied is key to the children's development of concentration and interest in their work. (pp. 93-95)

Montessori (1949/1995) calls interruptions a negative action that says to children, "Don't apply yourself for too long at any one thing. It may tire you" (p. 241). Interruptions to children's work may seem small to adults, but they have large effects on children's abilities to follow their interests, or as Roderick (1991) says, to "leave the main road to take a detour" (p. 104). Montessori teachers understand that, given unrushed, open-ended time, in a meticulously prepared environment, children will delve deeply and enthusiastically into their own interests. Roderick explores the openness that comes with unmeasured time:

Clock time can give way to *kairos* or the experience of unmeasured time, and metered space steps aside for uncharted openness. We can be, we can be experiencing, we can inhale the beauty before us without counting miles and minutes. (Roderick, 1991, p. 105)

Administrators can provide caring support for the very large work of teachers, by attending to the small details that are important, seen "up close and big" (Greene, 1995). If they look at the classroom "small," from a distanced, detached point of view, they might miss the subtle influence of small things.

The large concerns of the six teachers who participated in this research project are those small influences that can only be seen from the midst of their classrooms.

Administrators, if they listen to these large concerns, might attend to small things such as providing well-structured, orderly and predictable school routines and well-equipped classrooms, within which teachers can create beautiful, orderly prepared learning environments to support children in their personal, passionate, enthusiastic explorations of the big world.

The *Mu* of Not Yes, Not No

In the tensionality of difference that grants a rupture, you dwell in difference as difference, in the *mu* of not yes, not no.... You, in living in the opening refused to bring closure by a synthetic fusing of horizons which brings about an end to tension. (Aoki, 1991, p. 64)

The time I have spent with this study calls me to enter a space like the one Aoki names: “the *mu* of not yes, not no.” He names this space in conversation with Francine Hultgren, my pilgrimage guide and dissertation advisor, as she reflects on the power of being at home in our journeys of being and becoming:

Is the “saving power” really, then, the journey – the discovery of “otherness” as one moves forward, experiencing the tensions between leaving and entering – the turnings of the paths with others as they present themselves? To be at peace – to dwell and to be at home in the world – does not mean to dissolve the tension, but rather to lend a helping hand to being as the way traveled is thought about. (Hultgren, 1991, p. 59)

When I first set out on this pilgrimage/study, I had only an anticipatory impression of what the journey ahead might be. As I continued, I experienced joy in shared moments and the opening of new horizons, first in conversations with professors and other graduate students, then with the teachers who joined me in conversations about their teaching lives, and then with poets, philosophers and curriculum theorists who joined our conversation. As I approach the end of this writing journey, I rejoiced for a time in the notion that I might be seeing the beginning of a glimmering of light at the end of the tunnel.

But now, as I near the bright light at tunnel’s end, I begin to understand that the journey is not ending now. This pilgrimage/study leads outward into more turnings, more pathways, and more possibilities of glimpsing new horizons. The journey itself has become my home, and in searching for answers, I have learned that the journey is not so much about finding final answers; it is really more about the questions behind answers.

My journey has become a movement within and around and beside questions that are not answered through resolving difference. My questions are not about yes, and they are not about no. They are about the voice within the dialectics of difference, the voice that speaks of movement, and change, and becoming.

In this final chapter I suggest that public school Montessori teachers ought to come out of their corner havens, risk vulnerability and engage in conversations about differences. I explore the value of collegial communities that grow from trusting relationships. I propose that administrators might reach out in caring ways to Montessori teachers who feel a sense of strangeness when they enter public schools. I also suggest that administrators look at the large effect they have on classroom life when they make decisions about small things. Are these answers? Or are they really just the beginnings of new questions?

I have journeyed through this study with the stories of six teachers, but there are many other stories. What is the lived experience of parents, traditional teachers, administrators and the students themselves in public Montessori schools? What meanings do they take from their encounters with Montessori teachers? I have suggested conversations that might create common ground between teachers, parents and administrators, but there are other conversations that need to take place. What conversations are needed with policy makers whose decisions shape the landscape of public schools? How might public school Montessorians share what they learn about teaching and learning in public schools with Montessori teacher trainers and traditional teacher educators? What are the conversations that might open new possibilities for supportive encounters between public and private school Montessorians?

This pilgrimage/study has opened my heart to the profound possibilities of dwelling with questions that arise as I listen to stories and catch glimpses of the life journeys of other people. I know more now about the power of being silent and listening for the being and becoming of other adults, not just to children. My heart is not less tense in the face of vulnerability, but it is more opened to experiencing the resonant harmonics carried in tension. I am more willing to risk vulnerability by asking questions about the perspectives of other people, and I am also more willing and able to risk telling my own stories. This pilgrimage/study has brought me to an understanding that public Montessori schools can become more creative, more joyous and more hopeful places if teachers, school leaders and parents encounter each other in the spirit of Levinas – through embracing the kinds of ethical relations with each other that open up possibilities of shared journeys.

In the spirit of the questioning possibilities of journeys, I do not say or believe that Montessori teaching practices offer final answers to questions about what it means to work for the good of children. Nevertheless, I think the presence of Montessori classrooms in public schools does provoke profound and important questions. The harmonics that sound forth in my study as teachers tell stories about testing and standardization of curriculum are dissonant harmonics. My heart wants these dissonances to move toward resolution. I believe, with Noddings (2005), that it is good to “listen attentively and to respond as positively as possible” (p. xiv) to perspectives of educators who sincerely believe that the good of children is found in prescribing what they should learn, and to those who measure the success of schools by testing how much of that prescribed knowledge children can identify on tests. But I also believe that we ought to

make more room in conversations about schools for other ideas about the good of children. I believe the presence of Montessori in public schools opens up the conversation to include other ways of thinking about childhood and schools.

My pilgrimage/study has carried me into an intimate conversational space with the words of six very perceptive and caring human beings. Each day they ask themselves what they can do to help each child in their care become response-able in the sense Huebner (1999a) brings forth:

The student is introduced to the wealth and beauty of the phenomenal world, and is provided with the encouragement to test out his response-abilities until they call forth the meaning of what it is to be thrown into a world as a human being. (p. 112)

Every day these teachers carefully attend to both the academic growth and the inner lives of children. They may or may not also think critically about the societal forces that shape the resources available to schools and families. They may or may not examine the meanings of race and cultural differences in the lives of their students. They may or may not question their responses to power structures within the schools. They may tend to withdraw into the protection of their corner havens. There is always more that can be done, and more that can be questioned.

But these Montessori teachers are doing something meaningful and powerful in their day-to-day classroom lives as they reach out and try to make a world where children can flourish in love. I return to Rilke's reflection on heart work:

And the world that is looked at so deeply
wants to flourish in love.

Work of the eyes is done, now
go and do heart work. (1934/1995, p. 129)

In my classroom, and in the hallways and meeting places of my school, I look forward to a journey of heart work. I look forward to listening to stories, to questioning, and to talking about my stories. I look forward to the turnings ahead, although I cannot yet see them. I look forward to dwelling, with Others, in a journey of continued becoming.

APPENDIX A: INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

Linda Massey
16225 Livingston Road
Accokeek, Maryland 20607
301-283-0407; elemmassey@yahoo.com
May 2006

Dear _____,

I would like to invite you to engage in a study that explores the experiences of Montessori teachers working in Montessori public school classrooms. I am conducting this qualitative study as a doctoral student in the Department of Education Policy and Leadership at the University of Maryland, College Park, under the direction of Dr. Francine Hultgren. The purpose of this study is to understand what it is like for Montessori teachers to enter into teaching and learning relationships with young people in public schools. As I seek to understand this experience, I will tape-record and transcribe approximately three conversational interviews, and invite you to write one reflection on your experiences in public Montessori classrooms.

The first conversation provides an introduction and a time for you to share your experiences of being a Montessori teacher in public school. The second and third conversations will follow my analysis of the conversations. The third conversation will be a group conversation that includes all participants in the study. Meeting times will be arranged at a time and place that is mutually agreed upon by participants and researcher. After I have completed the research, I will share the results with you.

I am interested in setting up initial conversations for May or June, 2006, and completing the study by December, 2006. If you have any questions and/or would like to be one of my conversants, please contact me at elemmassey@yahoo.com, or (301) 283-0407. By sharing your insights and experience in this research study you will be contributing to a more complete understanding of the place of Montessori teaching practices in public schools. It is my hope that the understandings gained in this study will be used to guide and inform policy decisions pertaining to Montessori teaching practices in public schools. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Linda Massey

*Francine Hultgren, Advisor
University of Maryland
Telephone (301) 405-4562*

APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Initials: _____ Date: _____

Page 1 of 3

Project Title:**PILGRIMS AND GUIDES: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF GUIDING AND BEING GUIDED BY CHILDREN IN PUBLIC MONTESSORI SCHOOLS****Why is this research being done?**

This is a research project being conducted by Linda Massey at the University of Maryland, College Park. We are inviting you to participate in this research project because you are an experienced Montessori teacher in a public school Montessori classroom. The purpose of this research project is to illuminate the experiences of Montessori teachers who work in public school Montessori classrooms, in order to inform public school policies and procedures.

What will I be asked to do?

The procedures involve conversations and personal writing, which will provide text for analysis. Topics for these activities include teaching experiences with children in public Montessori classrooms.

- You will be asked to participate in approximately three tape-recorded and transcribed conversations, each at least one hour in length. Conversations will take place at a place and time mutually agreed upon by you and the researcher. The type of questions that will be asked include:

What led you to become a Montessori teacher?

What drew you to teaching in public schools?

Can you describe a particularly vivid moment in your classroom when you felt you were “on the right track?”

What particular experiences do you feel draw you away from the Montessori way-of-being with children? What is it like to be a Montessori teacher in the face of these circumstances?

Tell me about an experience in public schools during which your Montessori teaching practices were either challenged or supported.

- You will be asked to provide one written reflection on your experiences of teaching in public school Montessori classrooms.

Initials: _____ Date: _____
Page 2 of 3

Project Title:

**PILGRIMS AND GUIDES: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL
STUDY OF GUIDING AND BEING GUIDED BY
CHILDREN IN PUBLIC MONTESSORI SCHOOLS**

**What about
confidentiality?**

We will do our best to keep your personal information confidential. To help protect your confidentiality, your name will not be used in any public documents or oral presentations. You will be identified by a pseudonym, unless otherwise desired.

- Notes, transcripts and cassette tapes will be accessible only to the researcher and kept in a locked cabinet in her residence. At the completion of this study, the tapes will be dismantled, and written records will be shredded.
- If we write a report or article about this research project, your identity will be protected to the maximum extent possible. Your information may be shared with representatives of the University of Maryland, College Park or governmental authorities if you or someone else is in danger or if we are required to do so by law.
- In accordance with legal requirements and/or professional standards, we will disclose to the appropriate individuals and/or authorities information that comes to our attention concerning child abuse or neglect or potential harm to you or others.

**What are the risks
of this research?**

There are no known risks associated with participating in this research project.

**What are the
benefits of this
research?**

This research is not designed to help you personally, but the results may help the investigator learn more about Montessori teachers' experiences teaching in public Montessori classrooms. We hope that, in the future, other people might benefit from this study through improved understanding of policy and practice in public Montessori schools.

**Do I have to be in
this research?**

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify.

**May I stop
participating at any
time?**

Initials: _____ Date: _____
Page 3 of 3

Project Title:

**PILGRIMS AND GUIDES: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL
STUDY OF GUIDING AND BEING GUIDED BY
CHILDREN IN PUBLIC MONTESSORI SCHOOLS**

**What if I have
questions?**

This research is being conducted by Linda Massey, a doctoral candidate in the Department of Educational Policy & Leadership at the University of Maryland, College Park, under the direction of Faculty Advisor:

Dr. Francine Hultgren
Department of Education Policy & Leadership
University of Maryland
College Park, MD 20742,
(email) fh@umd.edu
(telephone) 301-405-4562

If you have any questions about the research study itself, please contact:

Linda Massey
16225 Livingston Road
Accokeek, MD, 20607
(email) elemmassey@yahoo.com
(telephone) 301-283-0407

If you have questions about your rights as a research subject or wish to report a research-related injury, please contact:

Institutional Review Board Office
University of Maryland
College Park, Maryland, 20742
(e-mail) irb@deans.umd.edu;
(telephone) 301-405-0678

This research has been reviewed according to the University of Maryland, College Park IRB procedures for research involving human subjects.

**Statement of Age of
Subject and
Consent:**

Your signature indicates that:

- you are at least 18 years of age;
- the research has been explained to you;
- your questions have been fully answered; and
- you freely and voluntarily choose to participate in this research project.

Signature and Date

NAME OF

PARTICIPANT:

SIGNATURE OF

PARTICIPANT:

DATE:

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