

TOWARD AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE BEGINNING-TEACHER EXPERIENCE: CURRICULAR INSIGHTS FOR TEACHER EDUCATION

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As a graduate student, I thought about my career aspirations to be a pedagogue to student teachers, and I became concerned because I did not understand the pedagogic experience that would be most meaningful to people preparing to begin teaching. I believed that if I gained a deeper understanding of what beginning teachers were experiencing, and the meaning they were giving to their experiences, this knowledge could make me sensitive to student teachers' needs. My concern led me to begin a phenomenological journey toward an understanding of the beginning-teacher experience. This article discusses this journey and the insights I developed through my research.

Reflecting on my experience of being prepared to be a teacher, I believe my training generally focused on the technical *how-to*. The emphasis was on conceptualizing teaching as a technique. This preparation affected how I experienced my first year teaching. I saw teaching as a mode of *doing* rather than *being*. I saw knowledge as a commodity, collected during teacher training, and pedagogues as people who passed this knowledge on to students. I did not see pedagogy as a personal encounter between self and others, nor did I critically examine my assumptions about being a teacher or about education, knowledge, learners, and society. Exploring the possibilities for being tended to be absent in my teaching experience. In general, I passively accepted the role of teacher as prescribed by others.

Unfortunately, a role can alienate people from their own authentic possibility for being. Reflecting on my teacher preparation, I find myself uncomfortable with this instrumental-technical view of teaching, surely, teaching is more than merely passively transferring knowledge to students. What about the human aspect of teaching? What about the *being* of human beings? Greene comments:

Because teachers are living beings, they suffer objectification like other members of society, they also are thrust into molds. They play roles in many ways defined by others, although their interpretations of these roles must, in some manner, be grounded in an

understanding of themselves. Again, committed rationality also rests on the capacity for self-reflection. Boredom, lassitude, automation, and abstractness, all of these erode self-awareness and the desire to make sense. It ought to be possible to bring teachers in touch with their own landscapes. Then learning may become a process of the "I" meeting the "I."¹

Van Manen also considers teaching more of a personal and human experience with others. "A teacher must observe a child pedagogically. That means being a child-watcher who keeps in view the total existence of the developing child."²

What do teachers see? How do they see students? Teachers' vision depends on how they see themselves in the world. How do teachers see themselves? How do they experience pedagogy? Unless I examine these questions, how can I nurture prospective teachers into the profession? I turn toward phenomenology for answers to these questions as I try to understand the essence of starting a pedagogic journey. My task, therefore, is to re-search and to re-experience the world of the beginning teacher. My inquiry has one overriding question. What is it like to be a beginning teacher, as seen by the teachers themselves? To explore this issue, I revisit the experience of beginning to teach and look at it through different lenses. Focusing on personal experiences, of the teachers and myself doing this research, I begin to reveal what the experience meant for two beginning teachers. The knowledge gained through my research leads me to create conditions that may re-form what *to begin* and *to be* a teacher means and to critically reflect on the curricular insights for teacher educators.

CONTEXT FOR THE INQUIRY AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY FOR TEACHER EDUCATION

To make visible and understandable the actions and perceptions of beginning teachers, we need to unfold and reveal the reality of the lived experience as seen by the teachers themselves. This study seeks to disclose intersubjectively determined truth—what is authentically revealed and agreed upon as the essence of the beginning-teacher experience. Thus, the inquiry is not searching for a set of generalizations, nor to generate more abstract theory. The "answer," according to van Manen, "shines through" when our reflective questioning hears the logos (what we talk about) speak through the pedagogic descriptions.³ Empirical methodologies are unsuitable for this inquiry because they tend to place less emphasis on the importance of human feeling, cognition, emotion, and perceptions, and thus, they may disregard a teacher's

¹Maxine Greene, *Landscapes of Learning* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1978), p. 39

²Max van Manen, *The Tone of Teaching* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1986), p. 18.

³Max van Manen, "Reflections on Teacher Experience and Pedagogic Competency," in *Competence. Inquiries into Its Meaning and Acquisition in Educational Settings*, ed. Edmund C. Short (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1984).

being-in-the-world. If we ignore a teacher's being, how can we seek an understanding and construct meaning out of what the experience is like for that person? Jackson comments:

The teacher's classroom behavior does not always reveal what we want to know. Occupational attitudes, the feelings of satisfaction and of disappointment accompanying success and failure, the reasoning that lies behind action—these and many other aspects of a craft are scarcely visible except through conversations with a person who has experienced them. And it is not only *what* the practitioner says that is revealing. His way of saying it and even the things he leaves unsaid often contain clues to the nature of his experience.⁴

Hermeneutic phenomenology provides the framework in which I (the researcher), with the participants (beginning teachers), try to gain access to the meaning of the experience (the first year teaching) by asking questions that help open up the phenomenon to reveal a deeper existential understanding and interpretation. My interpretation represents an attempt at uncovering one possible meaning of how the beginning teachers in this study experience their *lifeworld*—"the world as we immediately experience it rather than as we conceptualize, or theorize about, it."⁵ This interpretation could change over time after entering into dialogue with others, reading literature and research studies, and rereading the text of our conversations at different times. This belief is built on the assumption that meaning never stands still.

The purpose of this article is to give insight and an awareness on how the beginning teachers experienced their first year teaching, to open up the possibilities of further dialogue into this phenomenon, and to offer new possibilities of thinking and acting and experiencing the world. Also, this study may contribute to teacher education. It may benefit university faculty who design experiences that aid preservice teachers' transition into the profession. It may also make supervisors, principals, other administrative staff, and teachers more sensitive to the reality experienced by beginning teachers. Raising individual consciousness may encourage the development of support systems to help teachers travel through their first year. In addition, the article may provide information that can contribute toward improving and redesigning both inservice and preservice teacher programs.

EXPLORATION OF THE PHENOMENON

According to Webster's dictionary, *beginning* means a starting or commencing, the first part, an early stage. *Teacher* is defined as a person who helps others to learn something, to instruct, to give knowledge or insight, to cause to know and understand. Thus, we could infer from the term that a

⁴Philip W. Jackson, *Life in Classrooms* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1968), p. 115

⁵Max van Manen, "Practicing Phenomenological Writing," *Phenomenology + Pedagogy* 2 (No 1, 1984): 37.

beginning teacher is starting the process of helping others to learn. But from where does the beginning start? Is the beginning teacher truly beginning or continuing something? If so, what?

Consider the meaning of *teacher*. What about teachers in the United States who fail the National Teachers Examination and are being fired? Were they teachers? Does the term now refer to a certain competency level? Is the essence of being a pedagogue reduced to technical expertise?

Much of the literature on beginning teachers before the mid-1980s reflected an attitude generally based on technical rationality.⁶ Veenman has looked at 83 international empirical studies on beginning teachers.⁷ Although studies using empirical research techniques may help provide an awareness of some technical problems beginning teachers may face during their first year in the profession, these studies can miss the dimension of pedagogic competence that transcends teaching viewed in technical terms. Van Manen refers to this dimension as "pedagogic tact" or "thoughtfulness," a sensitivity to a situation that enables teachers to do the right thing for a child.⁸ This sensitivity does not come from theory but is governed by what Habermas calls practical reasoning.⁹ Fortunately the beginning-teacher literature has recently begun to recognize the need for qualitative research that sees teaching as more than technical expertise.¹⁰

We can think of phenomenological inquiry as a departure point into exploring a phenomenon; therefore, I describe the work with my study participants as a journey. This study travels beyond stating the common problems facing beginning teachers and the conventional remedies for easing

⁶For example, Wayne K. Hoy, "The Influence of Experience on the Beginning Teacher," *School Review* 76 (September 1968): 312-323; Wayne K. Hoy, "Pupil Control Ideology and Organizational Socialization," *School Review* 77 (September-December 1969): 257-265; J. F. Lagana, *What Happens to the Attitudes of Beginning Teachers?* (Danville, IL: Interstate Printers, 1970); Daniel C. Lortie, "Teacher Socialization: The Robinson Crusoe Model," in *The Real World of the Beginning Teacher* (Washington, DC: National Commission on Teacher Education and Professional Standards, 1966); F. J. McDonald and P. Elias, *The Transition into Teaching: The Problems of Beginning Teachers and Programs to Solve Them, Summary Report* (Berkeley, CA: Educational Testing Service, 1983); J. K. Taylor and I. R. Dale, *A Survey of Teachers on Their First Year of Service* (Bristol, England: University of Bristol, Institute of Education, 1971).

⁷Simon Veenman, "Perceived Problems of Beginning Teachers," *Review of Educational Research* 54 (Summer 1984): 143-178.

⁸Max van Manen, "Action Research as Theory of the Unique. From Pedagogic Thoughtfulness to Pedagogic Tactfulness" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, April 1984).

⁹Jürgen Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971).

¹⁰Robert V. Bullough, Jr., *First-Year Teacher: A Case Study* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1989); Nedra A. Crow, "Preservice Teachers' Biography: A Case Study" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Washington, DC, April 1987); Nedra A. Crow, "A Longitudinal Study of Teacher Socialization: A Case Study" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, April 1988); Jesse Goodman, "Factors in Becoming a Proactive Elementary School Teacher: A Preliminary Study of Selected Novices," *Journal of Education for Teaching* 13 (No. 3, 1987): 207-229; Jesse Goodman, "The Political Tactics and Teaching Strategies of Reflective, Active

their situation. I seek to reveal what stands *behind* teachers' behavior—to discover what the experience of beginning to teach means to them—which, I hope, will lead to a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. My assumptions are based on the belief that we cannot improve conditions unless we first understand them.

The aim of my journey is to interpret the beginning-teacher experience as it is experienced. Therefore, I critically examine my assumptions of what constitutes reality through rational discourse with others. Discourse requires people (myself with the beginning teachers) to enter into a side-by-side relationship that creates and develops a "we-ness."

Two teachers entering their first year teaching accepted my invitation to become fellow travelers with me on the journey. Jane (pseudonyms are used to protect the teachers and their schools) became a teacher, after raising her three daughters, because she believed she had something to contribute to children's lives. She thought being a teacher could be something special, and therefore, she was proud to enter the profession. Jane secured a job, early in the summer, to teach social studies at her student-teaching school. Kim was 22 years old, half Jane's age. Many hours in her childhood were spent playing "teacher." She could not believe she was actually a teacher, however, after her academic achievements at school. Kim was hired as a home economics teacher two days after the academic year had started. She entered teaching while she was also confronting changes in her personal life—a new marriage, a new house, and family discontent.

I met with each teacher, separately, once every two weeks during the fall semester and less frequently during the spring semester. The three of us dined together on two occasions. Between meetings we kept in contact by telephone. Dialogue, therefore, was the foundational process through which meaning and understanding unfolded. The two teachers' journals and other written reflections provided further channels that expressed their voices. The text, the transcriptions of our conversations, and the journals and written reflections were an invaluable dwelling place that enabled me to continually revisit and recover being. Through dialogue and a deeper look at the meaning of language, themes surfaced that were not initially revealed—leading to an exposure of the reality and being of the beginning-teacher lifeworld. I shared the emerging themes with Jane and Kim, and the themes became departure

Preservice Teachers," *Elementary School Journal* 89 (September 1988) 23–41, Gary Knowles, "What Student Teachers' Biographies Tell Us. Implications for Preservice Teacher Education" (paper presented at the conference of the Australian and New Zealand Association for Research in Education, Christchurch, New Zealand, December 1987), Gary Knowles, "A Model for Understanding Preservice Teachers' Biography Illustrations from Case Studies" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, April 1988), I Earl Seidman and Sharon A. Santilli, "In-depth, Phenomenological Interviewing: A Qualitative Approach to Understanding the Experience of Beginning Teachers" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, April 1988)

points for further dialogue that led to an intersubjective meaning of the interpretation of the experience.

REFLECTION ON THEMES: POSSIBILITIES FOR BEING

Because of the personal involvement of any researcher carrying out a phenomenological study, I was forced to question my taken-for-granted assumptions and to discover what certain experiences meant to me. What I did not realize at the beginning of my journey was the extent of the possibilities that this research would open up to me. I learned not only about the beginning-teacher experience, but I also had other realizations: a wider view of what being a pedagogue means, what considering teaching a vocation means; what being in the world as one-caring and as one cared-for means. Only when I started to question "what-is" did a whole new realm of possibilities for being and seeing the world enter my consciousness.

The themes that I write about revealed themselves to me, at the time of the analysis, as particularly significant in understanding the beginning-teacher experience for Jane and Kim. The significant themes differed for each teacher. Gaining access to the existential meaning of the themes from the lived experience did not come without a struggle. Usually through struggle, however, do we learn and become more aware of our possibilities for being.

Jane

As I began my encounter with Jane, the importance of caring in Jane's life emerged. To further my understanding of what being in the world as one-caring and as one-cared-for meant, I turned to some insightful literature.¹¹ Noddings describes what to be one-caring means:

Apprehending the other's reality, feeling what he feels as nearly as possible, is the essential part of caring from the view of the one-caring. For if I take on the other's reality as possibility and begin to feel its reality, I feel, also, that I must act accordingly; that is, I am impelled to act as though in my own behalf, but in behalf of the other.¹²

Through reading, dialogue, and reflection, I began to understand caring as a way of relating and meeting otherness rather than something one *did* to someone. Exploring a lifeworld of caring was a wonderful experience. I saw Jane as a real example to her students of what kind of life was worth living—a life committed to an ethical ideal. Through her commitment (caring), she tried to set others free to pursue their own possibilities for being. The following

¹¹Milton Mayeroff, *On Caring* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), Nel Noddings, *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

¹²Nel Noddings, *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), p. 6.

excerpt is part of a conversation we had toward the end of Jane's first year teaching:

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Sheila: How do you see teaching now? How do you see yourself as a teacher now as opposed to when you started? . . .

Jane: I think it is very special, and I feel great that I am doing a good job at it. It makes me feel like I have lots of pride in what I have done. I know I can improve, and I will keep trying to improve, but I really feel good about this year, about what I have done, and what the kids have done. It is a lot of give-and-take, and I feel I have gained a lot from this year.

Sheila: Like what?

Jane: Well, the confidence and pleasure of being with the kids and seeing them learn and get excited about things. All the little details, everyday type of things I find a lot of pleasure sharing them with them, feeling that I am special to them, and that they care about me, too. . . . I was just thinking this weekend, gee, I wish this was just the beginning of the year, all the things we could accomplish because we feel like we are going in such tandem now. It goes so smoothly, and we are in tune with each other, and we would not have to go through the time it takes to get to know each other [laughs]!

Sheila: What kind of things reveal the care they have for you?

Jane: Oh, just the way they like to come up and talk with me, and they treat me with respect.

Sheila: How has it changed throughout the year? Do they now talk with you about different things?

Jane: Oh, it was respect in the beginning of the year, but it was, it is a kind of nebulous thing, it is kind of a feeling. It is a feeling that they are interested in me, and they want me to be interested in them. Not just a stranger, I don't trust you. It is they have a feeling of trust for me, and because of that they want to share parts of their life with me. They are willing to open up in class and share. They know I am not going to criticize unless they do something wrong or are rude; then, I don't hesitate to let them know. But whatever their opinion is, they have a right to it. Just that feeling that it is comfortable in class, they are comfortable, I am comfortable. It is a place where ideas can flourish, they are not closed off. I think that is part of the way they trust me and care for me, too. I gain from that, you know, the excitement from seeing them learn, or when an idea hits, or when they get excited about something. A lot of times I would like to keep on the lesson for another hour or so, but of course you have to cut it off. I guess that is a good feeling to know, "Oh well, I am sorry I have to cut it off here; I wish we could go on." Better than having them say, you know, "Ugh, how many more minutes until class is over [laughs]?"

As I traveled the journey with Jane, I sought to unfold how her existence grounded in caring revealed itself and how she experienced pedagogic caring. Themes that became significant included her commitment to life, the world, and subject matter, her concern for authenticity and social justice; her curiosity about the world; and her desire to make sense out of her own lifeworld. Jane described teaching as gardening. The analogy revealed how she saw pedagogy as a caring, nurturing, guiding relationship with people that helped them

grow to their individual potential. Jane felt a sense of security and belonging to the school, of receiving praise, and of being cared for; she had pride in her work; she lived with the presence of hope.

I interpreted Jane's hope to be for the children's well-being. Hope builds strength in the belief of possibilities. Experiencing her students as hope appeared to activate and guide her journey as a pedagogue. "The reward for both parents and teachers is the presence of hope. That is what a child can teach us. It is what a child *must* teach us if we are to be true and good parents and teachers."¹³ The following excerpt reveals how Jane experienced hope as fully alive. Her language reveals happiness, warmth, affection, excitement, and zeal as she describes her joy and pride in being a teacher.

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Jane. I am enjoying their personalities. Their uniqueness. I want them to be happy. I want them to enjoy life. When we enjoy life, it is nice to share that, it makes you happier . . . It is not totally selfless. Certainly, a lot of it is because I get a good feeling. So, if the child is happy, too, and of course, that is where the creativity comes in, too. If you feel like you have played a part at all in promoting that, it makes you feel great. It makes you feel like you have, not really created something, I don't know if you can go that far, but you may have had some influence. Maybe it was some good influence, then I think that is important, and you have added something to life. You have certainly added something to their lives.

The Importance of Pedagogic Caring

From my desire to understand the essence of Jane's pedagogic caring, I began to question the nature of my caring. How did I experience caring? What does to be one-caring as a pedagogue mean? Was there a difference in the nature of being one-caring as a pedagogue and one-caring as a mother, daughter, friend, or member of society? How is my caring sustained and weakened? If I am not caring, how am I experiencing my being?

Reflecting on these questions, I began to develop an understanding of what to be caring means. I interpret caring as a way of being-in-the-world that longs for goodness. Caring calls on my capacity for receptivity, relatedness, and responsiveness toward others as well as myself. It requires me to be honest, patient, reflective, and hopeful. Above all, it requires me to be committed to my ethical ideal, the meaning of my life—to be one-caring. Caring is not completed if I care only *about* something. Action is required on behalf of the cared-for. Understanding the difference between caring about something and caring for something provided the jolt I needed to raise my consciousness and reflect on my own ability to be one-caring.

Gaining a deeper understanding about the nature of caring allowed me to expand my vision of the meaning of pedagogy. My new vision opened up

¹³Max van Manen, *The Tone of Teaching* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1986), p. 29.

possibilities for my being-as-pedagogue that released me from predefined role expectations. Greene comments that as we become more aware of our existence, we feel a sense of freedom when we realize our possibilities for being.¹⁴ Influential literature on pedagogy encouraged me to dwell on my questions about pedagogy and to raise further questions.¹⁵ Can we teach people to be pedagogues? Why do people enter into teaching? How do people perceive teaching? and the school system? Do schools promote an environment where pedagogic care can reside and grow? How does the school system reward teachers for being ones-caring? Where do teachers learn about caring?

Phenomenological research aims to promote action to bring about change. Experiencing freedom to be, therefore, I am confronted with reflecting on what action I wish to take as I face possibilities to be a pedagogue to student teachers. Before sharing my thoughts on this issue, I reflect on my journey with Kim because this encounter has also affected my action.

Kim.

Kim's childhood dream was to become a teacher. After one year of teaching, her contract was not renewed because of overstaffing. Kim did not seek another position teaching. Her beginning year left her feeling, "My lifelong dream has turned into a nightmare." My analysis of Kim's experience as a beginning teacher was a struggle. I struggled to understand her being because it generally remained concealed under a possibly inauthentic veneer; she saw the world through technical lenses. Kim usually resisted my challenge to help lead her back to a recovery of being by raising her consciousness and to question her taken-for-granted assumptions about the meaning of teaching and being a teacher. Kim remained with the familiar what-is and was not willing, or able, to make the leap into an existential exploration of being. In the past, apparently she was not encouraged to question her assumptions and beliefs about pedagogy, and thus, I think she was unaware of what was happening to her. Perhaps her acceptance of what-is became part of the role she was acting out as a teacher. Maybe she needed to separate herself from what-is to allow her being to emerge. To do so, however, she had to be aware of the condition. I was unable to bring her level of awareness to a stage where she sought a recovery of being. I missed opportunities to help Kim explore

¹⁴Maxine Greene, *Existential Encounters for Teachers* (New York: Random House, 1967)

¹⁵David E. Denton, "That Mode of Being Called Teaching," in *Existentialism and Phenomenology in Education*, ed. David E. Denton (New York: Teachers College Press, 1974); Dwayne Huebner, "The Vocation of Teaching," in *Teacher Renewal*, ed. Francis S. Bolin and Judith McConnell Falk (New York: Teachers College Press, 1987); Max van Manen, "Action Research as Theory of the Unique: From Pedagogic Thoughtfulness to Pedagogic Tacitfulness" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, April 1984); Max van Manen, *The Tone of Teaching* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1986)

the unfamiliar—maybe I, too, was hesitant to leave the comfort and security of the familiar and be led by the relatively unknown (phenomenological inquiry). To try to relive what I was experiencing during my encounter with Kim, I turn to a reflection I wrote then.

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I sit here thinking about Kim. I feel unsure of the path to take on my journey. I have reached a point where I am faced with many possible directions to take. I recall Robert Frost's poem in Jane's personal landscape—"Two roads diverged in a yellow wood . . ."—as I see myself standing at an intersection, and I'm trying to peer down the paths to assess their potential. Alas, they give me no clues. I hesitate to take any of them. My journey lately has been frustrating. . . . Confused and anxious, I stop and think. Am I not understanding who Kim is? Is this because she is unsure of who she is also?

I reflect on our conversations—her excitement and animation discussing personal details, such as her husband, her social life, clothes, etc. Then, vague and inconsistent comments pepper our conversation about school and her teaching. My probing questions are evaded and deflected in favor of an anecdote that may or may not be related to my question.

I wonder at times what she is avoiding. Is it too difficult, painful, or uninteresting to think about herself and reflect on her experience of being-in-the-world? How much can I push her to think about her being? Am I justified to push her at all? Maybe I am confusing her more in exploring her being by raising some issues for her to think about. Perhaps things are just moving too fast in her life—becoming a teacher, and a new wife, eloping, dealing with family feuds, having to take responsibility for herself instead of such a role being played primarily by her father. Maybe seeing things in black and white, rather than critically reflecting on the shades in between, gives her stability and comfort. How can we explore possible alternative ways of seeing and being-in-the-world together?

I worry about hurting Kim. I don't want to upset her by confronting contradiction in her dialogue. The inconsistencies *are* part of Kim and lead me to see her in various dimensions. Thus, to paint a portrait of Kim I need many sketches to work from, to capture the multidimensional character of her being and her existence. It is just so difficult to start to paint.

My reflection reveals how I was struggling to understand Kim's being. I was uncomfortable and anxious as I experienced the strange and unfamiliar. In the past, my technical lenses provided me with ready-made objective answers to my problems. Here, I confronted the responsibility for creating and developing existential meaning out of the experience. Maybe I struggled because I lacked the confidence to leap into the unknown? Or, did I still lack phenomenological vision? I could not see Kim's being emerge. Maybe I was seeing it, but I did not realize it as such. Maybe only now can I be led back to where I started and raise the questions that the text answers—what being a beginning teacher means to Kim.

Because of a technocratic vision, Kim tended to see teaching as an act (doing) rather than as a mode of being-in-the-world, although the latter did surface as the year progressed, especially in her encounter with her child-development students (child development was a class Kim taught in the home

economics department). External performance was important to Kim and often caused her anxiety about her ability as a teacher. She generally saw evaluators and supervisors as a threat. To cope with this anxiety, she frequently tried to shift responsibility onto others. The following statements, taken from the text, highlight her need to blame others.

No one sat down with me and told me exactly what was expected.

She caused me to do that.

Do you know how much running around I did? They should have done a lot of it, too, you know.

It is the department; they are not social with anyone.

Someone should have said, "Can you come so I can explain everything?" No one did that. Carmen County probably screwed it up. No one told me that that is what I should have done.

No one tells me anything.

Because Kim did not really understand herself, she tended to adopt a defensive facade. She blamed others or distorted her perception of the situation to fit into her existing perceptual field. Only by living in the tension and reaching toward authenticity and possibility, however, can learning take place as one's being emerges.

Kim's biography revealed the importance to her of feeling cared for in her surroundings. Unfortunately, Kim believed her teaching environment lacked a caring attitude. Unlike Jane, she did not feel a sense of belonging to the school. She was not given a room that she could call her own; she was continually being mistaken for a student; she thought she was given the remains of rooms, furniture, chaperone duties, classes, and students. This situation caused Kim to experience a lack of power in her being-as-teacher. She became bitter, resentful, and often distrustful of people with and for whom she worked.

One encounter greatly affected her beginning year teaching and caused her much anxiety. teaching emotionally mentally retarded (EMR) students at the start of her day. She had not faced people with such handicaps before. Her insecurities about these students led her to fear for her safety and that of her students. Because of her lack of trust and her fear of a student dying, I believed, Kim had difficulty allowing herself to be one-caring for these students. During our conversations about her EMR students, I thought Kim was aware of things surfacing about herself that she had not confronted before.

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Kim: One of them does not clean, brush her teeth, because from her medication, someone told me, her gums just swell, well that is fine, but they bleed. She is talking while they are bleeding, you know. If she takes a shower once a week, I would be pleased. I don't know what it is. There are some that shake. . . .

Sheila. Perhaps that in itself has been a learning experience, you know. Relating to that kind of person and what help they need. I guess it does not hit home unless you are faced with dealing with it.

Kim. Sure, but I don't think the school made the best decision on allowing them in, I really don't. It is just not suitable. . . . Some of them come in with these bruises. I can't sit down and talk with them. One of the boys, his pants were kind of low and his shirt was up, and I saw this huge gouge in his back. It is not like I asked or anything or even that I wanted to ask. But I should not have been [stops]. I am giving them everything, but it is just that psychologically I don't know if I am doing the right thing.

Sheila: It is troubling you?

Kim: Right now, I am just doing, you know.

Because she felt repulsed by some of her students, Kim appeared to experience guilt. In these remarks, Kim began to acknowledge her guilt but stopped herself from continuing. Instead, she perhaps tried to relieve her guilt by saying, "I am giving them everything." Maybe in a desperate search for ways to escape her guilt, she claimed that she was not trained to teach these students, and yet administrators "stuck" them with her. Noddings comments on how we try to rationalize our guilt:

To spare ourselves guilt, we may prefer to define our carings in terms of conformity and/or regard to principle. If the other does not respond, we are still quite safe from criticism. We are righteous. We act in obedience to some great principle . . . and from the potential cared-for we avert our eyes. We do not care for him any longer.¹⁶

If our dialogue had continued, however, maybe I could have helped Kim live through any discomfort and pain and see other possibilities of being through an authentic encounter with reality. Kim's encounter with the EMR students raises a question for student-teacher educators: How might we prepare students to meet up with such differences among people as handicaps? Like most student teachers, Kim had taken a theory course on special education, but she had no practical experience to help her understand the everyday reality of the situation. Does Kim's lack of understanding about handicapped people also say something about our society? To what extent does society develop an understanding of, and caring and responsibility toward, its members?

According to Kim, she went into teaching because she wanted to relate to people the way some of her teachers had related to her; she wanted to receive others as one-caring. Her teaching environment, however, generally did not encourage this desire. Only with her child-development students did she experience teaching as a mode of being-in-the-world and encountering others in a pedagogic relationship. Through Kim's experience of sharing space

¹⁶Nel Noddings, *Caring. A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), p. 40.

with these students as mutually caring, she seemed able to share the joy and excitement of learning.

Kim tended to allow herself to be one-caring as a pedagogue to some students and not others. Apparently, the need to feel cared for was of primary importance to Kim, and it affected her ability to receive others in a caring relationship. Jane, on the other hand, perhaps felt more secure about herself and was more willing to risk being one-caring, even if it meant rejection. Noddings believes that we need practice in caring to improve our ability to care.¹⁷ Jane had the advantage of being 22 years older than Kim and raising three children. According to van Manen, the parenting experience unfolds our pedagogic nature.¹⁸ What does parenting do to our perception of pedagogy? How does age affect a person's view of pedagogy? What do we gain with age? Do younger and older persons, parents and nonparents, enter into teaching for different reasons? What does pedagogy mean to them? Educators need to reflect on these important questions when planning and implementing teacher-education programs.

CURRICULAR INSIGHTS OF THE RESEARCH FOR TEACHER EDUCATION

Jane and Kim had different experiences of beginning to teach. How much of the difference was due to their ages, their biographies, their parenting experience, their school environment? Did they see pedagogy differently? Did their school environments espouse different pedagogic beliefs? The answers to these questions could provide insights for teacher education and avenues for further research. Should, for example, educational institutions be encouraging more parents to become teachers? Should we require those entering teacher-education programs to be older than the typical 22-year-old? What should we teach student teachers? Can we, in fact, teach people to be pedagogues?

Pedagogy: A Way of Being-in-the-World

According to van Manen, pedagogy is a certain questioning and doubting: Did I do the right thing? Why did this student do that? What can I do about this?¹⁹ Pedagogy is not a technique we can learn, a process or content, nor even action or intent. Pedagogy is a way of observing, listening, and relating to children. It is a way of being-in-the-world with children. If pedagogy is unteachable, perhaps, as educators we need to focus on helping student teachers understand the essence of teaching and then help them to strive toward it.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Max van Manen, "We Need to Show How Our Human Science Practice Is a Relational Pedagogy," *Phenomenology + Pedagogy* 4 (No. 3, 1986): 78-93.

¹⁹Ibid.

Because of my journey with Jane and Kim, the importance of caring in a pedagogic encounter lies at the heart of my interpretation of the essence of teaching. Thus, my curricular insights of teacher-education research focus on how to place caring firmly in the curriculum. My research supports Noddings, who comments, "The primary aim of every educative institution and of every educative effort must be the maintenance and enhancement of caring."²⁰ Jane's and Kim's encounters with beginning to teach highlight different effects of experiencing caring in teaching. Jane's experience revealed what it felt like to be in and to help create a caring environment. Kim's journey pointed out some effects of working in an environment she perceived to be uncaring for her personally. She saw herself as an object (as opposed to a subject) in the system and reacted to the objectivity the system placed on her.

Caring as a way of being-in-the-world, and meeting otherness as one-caring, should be the lens through which we examine all educational aims and objectives (and societal aims, if we discuss caring in a broader context) because ethicality is fundamental to a functioning society. Nurturing the ethical ideal, therefore, should be the responsibility of all pedagogues because it is the essence of teaching when teaching is seen as a way of being.²¹ What happens, however, if we do not view teaching as a way of being-in-the-world? How do teacher educators encourage student teachers to experience teaching as *being* as opposed to *doing*? What do teacher-education programs need to establish a more caring environment?

Teacher-education programs have predominantly focused on providing students with how-to techniques that stressed performance levels. Students, teachers, and parents who wanted quick-fix, easy, efficient, and effective methods to produce results measured in behavioral terms generally supported this approach, which did not consider teaching primarily as a human encounter. When teaching is taught as a set of roles and behavior patterns, students can depend on the values and beliefs of the "experts." Students, generally, are not encouraged to explore and develop their personal meaning of being, nor, for student teachers, what to be a pedagogue means. The result can be an abandonment of being and a burial of human potential. Perhaps, students do want to gain a sense of who they are, but the pressures of surviving overwhelm them. Rather than living in the tension, they quickly find a technique to cover it up, as Kim did. How can we encourage student teachers to live through the tension to gain a better understanding of themselves? How can we use the tension between being and nonbeing in a healthy way instead of fighting or working against it?

²⁰Nel Noddings, *Caring. A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), p. 172.

²¹This viewpoint has similarities to the earlier work of the educational psychologist Carl Rogers and his cohorts Combs, Glasser, and Jones. These "humanistic" educators believed education should emphasize students becoming caring and responsible people rather than students performing well on standardized tests.

The struggle with self is often a necessary part of growth. We often meet with our own potential of becoming only when we confront living in the tension created by the unknown. Also, having to accept responsibility for our own learning can cause part of our discomfort and anxiety. Kim could be seen as one example of a person not wanting to accept responsibility for herself. She often clinged to the familiar and tried to blame others, perhaps to release her guilt or anxiety. Unfortunately, this behavior could have contributed to Kim's disillusionment, possibly with teaching, possibly with herself, and to her leaving the profession after one year. For students to feel secure and confident to explore the unfamiliar, they need to feel they are cared for as individuals. Kim did not feel cared for in her school environment. In support of Rogers, I believe teacher educators need to let student teachers' voices be heard by providing spaces and time for dialogue in preservice programs.²² Also, encouraging students to write journals and other personal reflections could provide alternative channels for disclosing their being and exploring the existential meaning of phenomena. If we strive to be ones-caring for our student teachers, we need to be committed to hearing their voices. Teacher educators need to work toward a deeper understanding of how the world reveals itself to student teachers in its lived concreteness. We cannot claim to be teacher educators if we ignore what lies at the heart of our students' existence.²³

What happens, however, when we have students like Kim who do not necessarily want to explore their being? Maybe they need an opportunity in their curriculum to explore other disciplines like philosophy and anthropology. Jane's value system appeared to be developed through an exposure to politics and social studies. Other disciplines could expose students to alternative ways of knowing that could help them, and stimulate them, to see different possibilities for being-in-the-world. Also, reading about, or listening to, other people's lived experiences may help students to see the world through different lenses. I would encourage student teachers, therefore, to read books, journals, and doctoral dissertations that focus on interpretive research about teacher experiences.²⁴ Fortunately, educational programs have recently shifted their emphasis. More institutions are seeing the importance of stressing being and caring rather than performance levels. This viewpoint generally

²²Carl Rogers, *Freedom to Learn* (Columbus, OH: Charles E. Merrill, 1969).

²³Nel Noddings, *Caring. A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

²⁴Examples of such literature include Leslie A. Brooks, *Out of the Cocoon. Journal of a First-Year Teacher* (Canada: University of Alberta, 1983), Robert V. Bullough, Jr., *First-Year Teacher. A Case Study* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1989), Kevin Ryan, ed., *Biting the Apple. Accounts of First-Year Teachers* (New York: Longman, 1980), Sheila Stark, "A Phenomenological Journey toward Understanding the Lifeworlds of Two Beginning Teachers" (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Maryland, 1989), Lorene E. Turner, "Towards Understanding the Lived World of Three Beginning Teachers of Young Children" (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Alberta, 1984).

requires a shift in attitudes about the meaning of pedagogy, knowledge, students, and schools and a caring environment for exploring attitudes.

To establish a more caring environment, teacher-education programs have had to, and perhaps still more will have to, redesign their program focus. Relationships based on mutual caring need time to be nurtured in a receptive environment.²⁵ Education departments need to reemphasize the importance of supervising student teachers. Supervisors need time to establish caring relationships with their student teachers. To encourage student teachers to develop caring relationships with their students, we need to model caring. Many departments reward professors for their research output. Maybe we should also encourage a reward system for educators who spend much of their time looking after student teachers.

We cannot overlook the perennial problem of class size. For many years, educators have argued that smaller classes may encourage caring relationships to develop between faculty and students and between the students themselves. Smaller classes would allow teachers to enter into dialogue with class members and explore other possibilities for being.

Teaching: A Vocation

Huebner talks about teaching as a vocation, a calling. He describes the vocation of teaching as "living a life in the real world, permitting and even encouraging the world to call one out of oneself in a continuous journey of selfhood."²⁶ Huebner believes that schools often distort teaching by not supporting the *living* that is teaching. Instead, many schools focus on teaching as knowledge-producing. Huebner would like to see schools as "a place where those who are called to be teachers come together to live out their vocations."²⁷ To improve teaching, we must respond to what calls students into teaching instead of focusing on teachers' role performance. This view is not innovative, but it often gets buried by the evaluation and assessment procedures of schools and teachers. Unfortunately, such procedures generally measure efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability by performance output on examination results.

The teacher-education curriculum needs to encourage people to think about their own meanings of being-as-teacher: What does being with students mean? What is important to me as a teacher? Too often, perhaps, programs for student teachers have not encouraged them to think about, and express, their

²⁵Carl Rogers devotes a section to "Creating a Climate of Freedom," in *Freedom to Learn* (Columbus, OH: Charles E. Merrill, 1969). He covers concepts such as acceptance, trust, and empathy when discussing the interpersonal relationships that facilitate learning. He also addresses methods for developing conditions conducive to learning.

²⁶Dwayne Huebner, "The Vocation of Teaching," in *Teacher Renewal*, ed. Frances S. Bolin and Judith McConnell Falk (New York: Teachers College Press, 1987), p. 19.

²⁷*Ibid.*, p. 18.

pedagogic values and beliefs. Starting in their freshman year, students could benefit from a foundation that encourages them to think critically. Work by Denton, Greene, Huebner, and van Manen may help to expand students' understanding of these philosophical questions.²⁸ This literature would lead students to philosophize about the meaning of pedagogy rather than dictate a theory of education. Also, by thinking about experiences in their past and reflecting on the connection and influences on the present, students can begin to question reality and move into their own consciousness, appropriating what is most meaningful to them. This attitude can lead to self-awareness as students confront their existence in their personal lifeworld and reflect on how teaching enters their lives. Jane is a good example of someone developing a reflective attitude. Teaching, therefore, can be defined "from who they are and what they experience, rather than from what they do."²⁹ As a consequence of this action, teachers could gain access to experience rather than remain preoccupied with superficial performance. In this light, teaching becomes more a human venture.

As teacher educators (and as ones-caring), we, too, take a risk as we expose ourselves to others and the newness in the world. Teaching as a vocation, therefore, can become an adventure—but one accompanied by vulnerability, insecurity, and fallibility as we constantly question our reality and the meaning of being. Huebner believes we need to find ways to live without being overpowered by the unfamiliar. He suggests, "Vulnerability is endured in a community of care and support"³⁰ I believe Jane resided in a community of care and support both at school and with her family. By striving to receive others as ones-caring, she sought to provide spaces for people to experience freedom. Jane encouraged her students to be free to make choices that would shape their consciousness and construct their ethical ideal. Deeper understanding generally leads to more autonomy, which can bring greater responsibility for our own existence in the world and perhaps a more humane society. In an environment with a caring attitude, we hope students will not be afraid to ask for help. I believe teachers should see their requests as a healthy sign toward self-understanding, not as a sign of weakness.

²⁸David E. Denton, "That Mode of Being Called Teaching," in *Existentialism and Phenomenology in Education*, ed. David E. Denton (New York: Teachers College Press, 1974), Maxine Greene, *Existential Encounters for Teachers* (New York: Random House, 1967), Maxine Greene, *Teacher as Stranger* (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing, 1973), Maxine Greene, *Landscapes of Learning* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1978), Dwayne Huebner, "The Vocation of Teaching," in *Teacher Renewal*, ed. Frances S. Bolin and Judith McConnell Falk (New York: Teachers College Press, 1987), Max van Manen, *The Tone of Teaching* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1986).

²⁹Francine H. Hultgren, "Being Called by the Stories of Student Teachers. Dialogical Partners in the Journey of Teaching," in *Alternative Modes of Inquiry in Home Economics Research*, American Home Economics Association Teacher Education Yearbook 9, ed. Francine H. Hultgren and Donna L. Coomer (Peoria, IL: Glencoe Publishing, 1989).

³⁰Dwayne Huebner, "The Vocation of Teaching," in *Teacher Renewal*, ed. Frances S. Bolin and Judith McConnell Falk (New York: Teachers College Press, 1987), p. 26.

Entering into dialogue with others on the meaning of teaching and being a teacher may raise students' awareness about the diversity of backgrounds and beliefs we bring to teaching. Teacher educators should encourage student teachers to challenge stereotypic views of teaching and develop a critical consciousness about their own beliefs and the consequences of them. Again, this is not a new idea in education, but often our education system, and indeed society, encourages socialization. This attitude may be strong because of the pressure on people to "fit in" and not "rock the boat," or because of teachers' need to control the classroom situation. Thus, I wish to reinforce the importance of active student learning instead of students being passive recipients of information. Hultgren comments, "As reflections go deeper behind the initial 'voicing' of the experience—the student teachers undergo enculturation (the process of opening ways of relating to the world) rather than socialization (the process of conforming to established norms)."³¹ Educational programs for student teachers should be a time for growth and understanding, not solely a time to polish performance.

A CLOSING COMMENT

I reflect on a beginning teacher's comment: "As I became less genuine as an individual, I became more successful as a 'teacher in the system.'" This comment raises questions about teacher-education programs, as well as the educational arena at large and society. What kind of society will we create if we do not raise our consciousness of our being and existence in the world? To broaden our vision, our understanding, and the meaning of our experiences, we need to penetrate stereotypes, predetermined roles, and categories. People need to be nudged into disquietude where existential awareness begins.³²

As my understanding with beginning to teach is enhanced through my work with Jane and Kim, so too is my understanding of myself, which in turn enhances my capacity to be a caring person. I hope this experience continues to lead me toward being the pedagogue I want to be. The ongoing challenge for educators is to continue to clear the way for a pedagogic encounter with people that allows our being to emerge through caring and being cared for.

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³¹Francine H. Hultgren, "Being Called by the Stories of Student Teachers: Dialogical Partners in the Journey of Teaching," in *Alternative Modes of Inquiry in Home Economics Research*, American Home Economics Association Teacher Education Yearbook 9, ed. Francine H. Hultgren and Donna L. Coomer (Peoria, IL: Glencoe Publishing, 1989).

³²Maxine Greene, *Existential Encounters for Teachers* (New York: Random House, 1967)

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