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OF LOBSTER AND LEARNING ….

Coralie Bryant

Coralie Bryant is a former Assistant Superintendent in Seven Oaks School Division. Although retired, she remains active through her involvement in the Faculty of Education and elsewhere in the field of education.

When I was asked in the late 70's to take over as English Department Head at my school, I made a bargain: send me to a Canadian Council of Teachers of English Conference to become more acquainted with, what to me, was a new field. It was a profound experience, not only for the making of acquaintances, eating lobster, and experiencing Halifax during a transit strike, but also for the hearing of some incredible speakers from the field of Language Arts education. With enormous pleasure I heard Canadian author Hugh McLennan, British educator Douglas Barnes and language arts educator Bryant Fillion (who left Canada then for Fordham in New York). Fillion said something I never forgot: "Reading comprehension is not a set of discrete skills, but the willingness and ability to reflect." Like so many statements that we carry away from conferences, that is not the whole story. But it was a revelation to me to think of reading in this way and I think ultimately, it occurred to me to have as much to say about the process of *learning.*

For me, Fillion's statement drove home the necessity to teach language more holistically, to create a classroom where kids have the opportunity to engage in a lot of talk with each other and reflection about all kinds of texts, to tell stories, analyze and explain things, give speeches, share readings, debate, dramatize, journal -- in short, constantly read, talk and write. It took me awhile to wean myself from a script for teaching inherited from my own school days: Reader's Digest vocabulary exercises, short anthology readings, spelling books, a good deal of usage, some grammar, and the occasional (painful) essay. I was trying now to create a language-rich environment which would demand rigorous thinking -- about ideas, human experience and human diversity, the environment and other world issues; about forms and structures, audience, point of view, purpose and style.

A few years after the Halifax conference, I found myself at another, in Montreal, sitting in a massive audience listening to Anthony Adams from Cambridge describe research by Dr. Patrick Dias of McGill. Afterwards in the pub, I accosted Adams for the reference on Dias' article, then dashed to the McGill library to locate it. Now well known to many Manitoba Language Arts teachers, Dias described a way to teach kids to reflect on texts, talk about them, and become independent readers of literature. I wrote to Dias and, with his support in the years following, used this approach to conduct two research projects and a wide-scale assessment in Winnipeg classrooms.

Since then, many teachers in Manitoba and Canada will attest to the power of Dias' ideas in approaching the teaching of reading and literature and they had no less effect on me. Dias' notion that the teacher must initially get out of the way of the interaction between reader and text and create plenty of opportunity for discussion without teacher mediation was influential for teachers from Grade One upwards, but particularly at the secondary level. It helped teachers find a way to leave behind the transmission model of learning and lead students to construct their own meanings. This, I came to realize, was how learning takes place -- if it is to have power and meaning for the learner.

From that first conference in Halifax forward through the 80's, I was actively involved in CCTE, MATE (Manitoba Association of Teachers of English), Inkshed, and NTCE, attending their conferences regularly and ultimately serving on their editorial boards. I am much indebted to the support of my principal those many years ago for sending me off to such a pivotal experience. Nothing had a greater effect on my own professional development than this association with professional organizations.

WILSON'S WARBLES

Ernie Wilson

Ernie is a former teacher, consultant and school administrator in Seven Oaks School Division. He is currently retired and enjoying his varied interests.

The task of reflecting on a career spanning thirty-three years, all in the Seven Oaks School Division, is indeed ominous. The task of recalling a particularly meaningful event or story is troublesome because of the multitude of exceptional people and students who have touched my life.

From September 1967 to January of 1976 I taught physical education at Templeton, Red River and West St. Paul Schools. In 1970, West St. Paul became a K-9 facility -- with a new gymnasium and our first look at open area class rooms.

I first met Phillip at Red River School. His muscular coordination difficulties were immediately evident. The simplest of exercises (warmup included) were a tough chore for him. Some kids smiled, but they seemed to understand and appreciate how hard this was for him. Later, when we were at West St. Paul, the situation seemed unbearable to me. Phillip could not strike the badminton bird - no matter what. Imagine the blow to this young man's self-esteem. I resolved at that moment to do whatever it would take to build Phillip's confidence. Keith, a class mate of Phillip's, offered to assist! Keith became frustrated, but eventually the objective became a reality. Phillip was able to sustain a rally with Keith. To get to this point, we literally had to tie a string to the shuttlecock and place the badminton racket beside the shuttlecock so that Phillip could make contact. Then we moved to swinging the "bird" on the string. After Phillip achieved success, he moved to hitting the bird by himself and also to rallying with Keith. The joy in Phillip's eyes was evident; Keith's satisfaction at having helped a fellow student was immense.

Our method of assessment back in the late 60's and early 70's was one of self-evaluation – that of measuring oneself against the criteria of the particular skills in question. Students worked hard to do their best. They knew on what criteria they had performed well and they knew the items to which they had to pay more attention. Is this not really the true measure of learning and understanding? Why must we revert to picking away at self-esteem (however unintentional) by assigning grades or percents? We allowed students some time each class to practice the things that needed their attention. Students had time to plan for their skill development and fitness needs and experienced the success and elation of achieving their personal goals.

I could easily have chosen to write about the many gifted athletes that I was fortunate enough to coach. After all, these individuals had exactly the same goals as Phillip - simply to perform to their potential and accept nothing less from themselves but their best efforts, truly the real secrets to success.

During the early Maples years, we were blessed with a creative and caring group of physical educators. On many occasions three physical education teachers would welcome the students to the gymnasium for their class of anticipated worthwhile activity.

On a warm spring morning we all ventured out to the 400 M track for the customary/habitual 2 or 3 laps. The fact that we had three staff available enabled us to teach in many different ways.

The students romped off around the track. One by one they completed the required numbers of laps, with Rae and Barb reading their times.

As a substantial group gathered after having completed the task, they moved on to their selected activities. A few students struggled with the track, the heat, and the challenge. Slowly but surely their success was realized as they crossed the finish line. One lone figure proudly plodded on; time seemed to stand still. At one point I thought of intervening but thought better of such a move. Eventually the young man struggled across the line and apologized: "I'm sorry Mr. Wilson. I'll do better next time!" The number of laps and the time were completely irrelevant. You see, Vince moved with two canes and leg braces - a product of the challenge presented by his cerebral palsy. My eyes glistened as I most certainly replied "Vince you have absolutely nothing to be apologetic about". If the truth be known, the tears still well up when I recall all of Vince’s accomplishments.

The lessons learned by Vince's classmates are lessons learned through real life situations. How many students would dare utter the words "I can't" while in the presence of Vince? If by chance they forgot, they quickly realized that the goal for everyone was/is simply to do the best you can -- put forth your best effort. Surely these are the most important goals for anyone -- striving to put forth the best effort you are capable of, in that given moment. I have long held the belief that the most inhumane practice we have inflicted upon our students is that of assigning grades or percentage marks. Why is it that we cannot move to criteria of excellence? Criteria that …

- allow students to make errors
- allow them to try and try again
- encourage every student to achieve
- encourage every child to learn the habits of intelligent behaviour
- foster habits which will lead to success in life!

I can only hope that the time shift away from the extensive reliance on marks for motivation is approaching.

My grandson entered kindergarten this fall at Governor Semple School. Christian's enthusiasm is a joy to behold. I am hopeful that his joy and enthusiasm will continue through all his years in education. I am hopeful that his zest and curiosity for learning will continue to be nurtured by patient, caring teachers who above all else, teach the values and habits required to be successful - regardless of one's station in life. The values of "striving" were reaffirmed for me by Vince in the mid 80's at the Maples and again this past year at a conference in Victoria.

You see, we have known for a long time the debilitating effect of grading and percentages. We have known for a long time the positive rewards of authentic assessment, of working towards criteria for excellence. Yet things remain the same. We succumb to the political pressures that surround us -- be they other teachers, parents or students. We succumb to the status quo with which we are all too familiar. I believe the time is now for educators to move in directions that permit each child to learn and grow in ways that are appropriate for him or her. As Zen said many years ago "To know and not to do is yet not to know"

I know that each of you has many stories that would express the same "stuff". Perhaps you are thinking this guy has lost it (there may be a degree of truth here) and perhaps it is a good thing he is jogging into a renaissance. Rest assured I have not lost it, rather I hope my goal has been met -- to have people reflect on what I believe are major philosophical issues in education. I am hopeful that education will move to that place where we recognize and teach people that the greatest victory we will ever have is the victory over ourselves.

I am hopeful that in the words of Robin Enns, the true purpose of education will be about "teaching people how best to live life".

LANDSCAPING

Don K. Philpot

In 1997, at thirty-seven, Don returned to university as a fulltime student in the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba. Earlier, in 1993, he completed his Bachelor of Arts (with distinction), majoring in Native Studies, minoring in Sociology. While completing his Arts degree he continued to work fulltime as an educational interpreter and as a writer. His interest in writing emerged rather suddenly, rather surprisingly, while employed as a curriculum writer by the Native Education Branch (now the Native Studies Directorate). His first book for children, The Moons of Goose Island*, was short listed for the Books for Young People, Book of the Year award (1997). After an already long career in schools as a support person, an interpreter and instructor, Don, a strong proponent of responsive education and innovative educational programming, has now turned his attention to teaching and the pursuit of his art.*

The editorial committee has chosen to select excerpts from a larger piece of writing.

Writing helps me to make sense of the world, to make sense of ME *in the world. Through writing I grow as a person, a thinker, a reader, an artist, a teacher. Beginning my certification year I promised myself that whatever pressures I face I will continue to write. Even today I cannot conceive of myself as* Teacher*, distinct, apart from* Artist, *the greater sphere in which it exists.*

Atwell's model of the reading workshop, from In the Middle: Writing, Reading and Learning With Adolescents (1986)*, is the model I begin with. I am not working with adolescents, though. These are children, grade four. I am scared, anxious, more so on the verge of panic, thinking I should abandon the idea all together and take a more traditional, conservative stance: use a common text, an anthology, a worksheet approach. What if they resist? "Go ahead," they could say, "make us read." Because, for the* work*shop to* work, students—readers—must read.

Equally, teachers must read.

At the Students' Teacher Recognition Reception on April 29, 1999, honoring Dr. Wayne Serebrin, professor of early years education, I said the following:

Something happened to me. At some point during our second class this year—I had never done this before—I split my page, and besides making notes about content I made notes about you. I couldn't help myself. There you were, more than telling us what effective teaching is, what effective teachers do, how they look and sound and interact, what they believe in, the questions they ask, the problems they pose, the skills they possess, you were showing us content; Wayne, you personifying content. You didn't answer my questions, you listened. Effective teachers listen. You guided my learning, you didn't direct. Authentic learning is self-directed, self-assessed, self-evaluated, new initiatives self-determined. You made room for me to make mistakes, to explore, revisit, reflect, to find my way, you helped me teach myself. You learned with me, struck by wonder too, questioning too, ardent too, taking risks, puzzling, welcoming, nurturing, patient.

"Teachers who learn model the development of understanding and create a reciprocal relationship with students that legitimates their own struggles to learn," writes Martha Stone Wiske in "How Teaching for Understanding Changes the Rules in the Classroom" (from Managing the Interactive Classroom, p. 93). Because my teacher learns and continues to learn I can continue to learn, my commitment to learning strengthened. I wonder if this isn't the greatest effect of effective teaching, what Wayne embodies, a genuine passion for learning.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 10, 2000

9:40 The Reading Workshop
1. Preface 2. Job check 3. Jobs/conferencing

Today we add a new job to our READING WORKSHOP JOBS list.

1. Book find
2. Silent reading
3. Responding
4. Response exchange
5. Web work
6. (Mini) Book Talk Circle

Several weeks ago we held our first Book Talk Circle in the mini-gym. Actually we had three circles going, each with an adult presiding. Impressed by the confidence and enthusiasm shown by students towards their own reading and the reading of others, including the adults present who brought their own books to share, I have decided to give a scaled version a go, to be held during the workshop proper, and see what happens. I will preside for the first while to make sure the experience is a positive one. Not surprisingly there is a great deal of interest in the newly posted job. Members for

today's circle are chosen randomly; through a random draw. No one has ever contested a random decision.

I do not tolerate loafing. I will not spend my time superintending. Students have jobs. They must work on their jobs. They must finish their jobs. This is my expectation.

I have plans to extend the JOBS list even more:

7. Doubles reading
8. Newsletter work
9. Literature circles
10. To be developed

Buddy reading, read-alouds, book talk, guided reading, shared reading, reader's chair, reading theater, and home reading are in effect, part of the reading work-shop but not part of the reading workshop proper, their domains distinct.

David is new. We set him up with a writing notebook and a response journal. Even before I listen to him read I listen to him talk about books he has read. I need a sense of his interests. I will test his reading, casually at first, incidentally while we are looking for a *just right book*, later in the day. He can't remember the title of the book but he remembers what it was about. I format an entry for him in his response journal, his first entry, including a space for a title, the date, the approximate page length of the book, and a space for the type of response this will be. I accept his dictation, print. When he is done I ask him to create a suitable title, a placeholder till he remembers the exact title. Then, using our response chart, he must supply a name for the type of response he has given. We look at the chart

- a character
- an action
- a surprise
- a disappointment
- a mystery
- a parallel
- a revision
- an opinion
- a critique
- a comparison

His is a retelling. I discourage retellings. I'll tell him this later. For now I accept his retelling, write *An opinion*, and with that his response is complete.

Rita is next. She talks about her book. With a blue pen, there in her response journal, I record what she says. This is a better book, she says. Her last book was a dud: she abandoned it. We talk about that. We review the process of finding a just right book, often a time-consuming, frustrating process, even for expert readers. Books have to fit.

Misfits make reading arduous. Reading should be a challenge but never hopelessly painful.

I am concerned about Nolan. He goes for technical books. I summon him—"What are you reading?" *(This is Term III.)* He regularly borrows books I have put on display,

books brought to the room from the public library. Fossils. World War I. Machines. Snakes. Deserts.—DEAR books. His decoding, comprehension, and fluency are not a concern. I want him to try his hand at a chapter book. I help get him started. He may or may not abandon the book. Time will tell.

We have good days and bad days. A month ago, tipped by the sloppy, shallow, bland, mechanical responses handed in, I gave students the choice of continuing o*r* abandoning the reading workshop. I detailed the alternative, a basal (and worksheet)—the *traditional*—the common—approach. By my tone they surely could tell which approach I favored. Later that day a handful of students came to me privately wanting to know how one story or book could fit everybody's tastes when people's tastes were so different. They were very concerned, and justly so. A one-book-fits-all approach should, indeed, be cause for great concern.

WHEN WILL WE EVER LEARN?

Derwyn Davies

Derwyn is a well-known Winnipeg educator. He was very active in his school division and in the Manitoba Teachers' Society. Now retired, Derwyn continues his interest in learning and education. He is a frequent contributor to our journal.

Review of:

The Making of Intelligence by Ken Richardson
Weidenfeld & Nicholson, London, 1999. 218pp.

Technologies of Knowing; A Proposal for Human Sciences by John Willinsky,
Beacon Press, Boston, 1999.

"Wonders on earth are many," wrote Sophocles some two-and-a-half millennia ago; "and none more wondrous than man." This past century has witnessed wonders galore – flight, electrical power, radio, television, the computer, etc. Science has been largely responsible for such wonders – the incredible ability of the human mind to make leaps of insight and creativity about the universe, our world and mankind.

But when it comes to one of humankind's most distinctive feats of intelligence – teaching the young – the picture is confused. It is not so much that we are in some dark age as that we are dazzled by so many flashes of brilliant insight that it is difficult to make sense of what is going on. These two books offer both clarity and confusion, a warning and a direction.

John Willinsky's book is a prime example of what is wrong with much of what passes for academic thinking – about education as much as about the world. He proposes a way social sciences can "increase their knowledgeable contribution to the public sector". He outlines a corporate entity – Automata Data – which will cover, with an electronic presence, the full range of research activity in the social sciences. This is not too far from the plea Doris Lessing made in her Massey Lectures (*Prisons We Choose To Live Inside,* C.C.C., 1986): that our conscious awareness of our world and ourselves could lead us to social and personal insights.

Willinsky points out the problem with our Information Age: such a flood of material that we are in danger of drowning. He touches on the point made many years ago by a project which is almost exactly what he proposes: the ERIC Clearinghouse. The

experience here was that the volume of research citations was such that the problem shifted from finding information to sorting out the valid and relevant stuff. While he does put forward a technical proposal to deal with this problem, it is less than convincing.

The major problem with Willinsky's proposal is revealed in the way he treats the research on bilingual education and on learning to read. True, he does refer to the major studies, but throughout he takes the stance that all research is valid and important, provided it conforms to academic standards. Thus he is able to discuss, with a measure of approval, the Herrnstein and Murray book, *The Bell Curve.* While he takes the position that complex issues such as learning to read have no definitive solution and that a knowledge of the range of research would be beneficial to 'educators', he misses the point that all language and thought express a stance, sometimes referred to as a political position.

The sad reality is that, in spite of all the research in education and in psychology, there is an awful lot that is not worth reading. Further, the research only has value to the extent that a teacher can inform and extend his/her understanding and thus his/her teaching. It is not so much access to the research as one's use of the research that is the key.

Ken Richardson's book, *The Making of Intelligence* provides practically everything you wanted to know about intelligence and learning, but had no idea whom to ask. It is a comprehensive survey of the science of learning. Although prepared for the Open University (U.K.), it is clearly and sensibly written and the ideas are accessible to anyone interested.

Richardson begins with the key question: what is intelligence? From this unanswered and perhaps unanswerable question, he goes on to discuss the whole range of ideas and theories of intelligence and learning. These are fairly discussed and perceptively criticized without any suggestion that all are equally valid and important.

Perhaps the two most valuable issues are dealt with at some length: the genetic aspect of intelligence and the constructive concept. Given the oversimplifications which abound with respect to the nature and influence of genes, Richardson's review of current knowledge about gene functions gives a clear picture of the specificity of the genes' actions with respect to the development of the individual. The reality is, he argues, that the genes interact with the environment – which is the source of their immense potential.

He goes on from this to raise the key issues posed by John von Neuman: the complexity barrier, the point of complexity beyond which the ordinary rules do not apply. He extends this to issues of language, conceptualization and social learning. He takes Piaget's theory of the construction of knowledge further in discussing the critical importance of a dynamic learning environment.

Theories and research are far removed from the realities of teacher/student interaction, and to expect them to provide blueprints for classroom teaching is to misunderstand the place of theory in day-to-day practice. Theories require mutation through the individual teacher's own understandings and experiences. Research may illuminate or transform one's understanding, but unless mediated by the teacher, it remains abstract and remote.

Willinsky's approach to research, as with his promotion of computer programs, is simplistic. Ursula Franklin, in another set of Massey Lectures (*The Real World of Technology,* C.B.C., 1990) provides a more useful analysis of technology. She differentiated between prescriptive technologies, which control and holistic ones which people control and can use to extend thinking and understanding and to inform action. A holistic approach to educational technology would fit in well with Richardson's concept of dynamic construction of intelligence. Why are we so frightened of such freedom as this implies?

LANGUAGE GAMES OF TEACHER ACTION RESEARCH

Matthias Meiers

Matt is a teacher in Seven Oaks School Division. He was a member of the Masters' Cohort Program. Matt has a strong interest in the semiotics of language. His personal experience of being multi-lingual allows him to view language "with different eyes".

I. What makes a critical incident?

In "Learning to Teach by Uncovering Our Assumptions" Newman (1987) describes how a group of teachers narrativized critical incidents occurring in their classroom practice and concludes, "The only route I know to uncovering our instructional assumptions is to delve beneath the surface of what we are currently doing. Critical incidents offer us one powerful way of doing just that" (p. 7). The metaphor of delving and digging brings to mind the archeologist who digs up and brings to light what the earth has concealed. As it is situated in Newman's article, the metaphor underscores two ideas: first, it suggests that the teacher's pedagogical assumptions are already enveloped within her actions; and second, it implies that critical incident narratives allow the teacher-narrator to open this envelope and examine the assumptions contained within, perhaps for the first time. I mean to suggest that our pedagogical assumptions come into view when we pay attention to the educational conversations in which we participate.
School is a team effort. Teachers speak and act a professional culture. Within it they debate ideological commitments to methods such as phonics or whole language. These debates are matters of consequence because they entail ways of describing the proper activity of children at school. These debates focus on what is worth doing. Against the background of these ongoing conversations the action researcher describes and explains what she is doing in her classroom. The action researcher constructs critical incidents. Of the many episodes that occur in the fast-paced life of a classroom the action researcher chooses certain moments and labels them critical. This means that there is a principle of selection at work. This principle represents an ideological pre-commitment on the part of the researcher. A critical and theoretical teacher action researcher would be concerned with describing such ideological pre-commitments as expressions of the language game which the action researcher happens to be playing.

Rorty (1989) employs the idea of "language game" to suggest that a way of speaking is by definition context-dependent and purpose-relative. Therefore, an action researcher who intends to instruct herself and others about the pedagogy of whole language instruction will select critical incidents that describe the tensions of working within this methodology. I believe that the critical incidents of teacher action research are rhetorical gestures or moves in a serious language game that the researcher is employing to explore, describe and map out educative paths for children.

I wish to speak about two epistemological language games action researchers have to negotiate in their work. They are objectivism and critical theory. These are epistemological language games in the sense that teacher researchers use them to theorized educational practices. However, these language games enable and constrain the teacher researcher differently. Indeed, they may be incommensurable and mutually exclusive. My present understanding of the differences between objectivism and critical theory leads me to place objectivism in a bad light and assign the role of white knight to a pragmatic critical theory. Let us deal with each of these two language games in turn and begin with objectivism.

II. Objectivism

Objectivists believe that the social world of human beings works rather like the natural world in that both worlds are governed by laws. In the educational sciences objectivists assume an Archimedean point by employing a scientific method that is untainted by the contingencies of life and that delivers truthful statements about the laws that govern human learning. Authorized by this method objectivist statements in education offer us blueprints for successful action in the classroom. A blueprint for action assumes an objective status in so far as it promises success in all pedagogical contexts. In *The Sources of a Science of Education* Dewey (1929) offers an incisive critique of this viewpoint:

> *…there is a strong tendency to identify teaching ability with the use of procedures that yield immediately successful results, success being measured by such things as order in the classroom, correct recitations by pupils in assigned lessons, passing of examinations, promotion of pupils to a higher grade, etc.*
>
> *For the most part, these are the standards by which a community judges the worth of a teacher. Prospective teachers come to training schools… with such ideas implicit in their minds. They want very largely to find out how to do things with the maximum prospect of success. Put baldly, they want recipes. Now to such persons science is of value because it puts a stamp of final approval upon this and that specific procedure. It is very easy for science to be regarded as a guarantee that goes with the sale of goods rather than as a light to the eyes and a lamp to the feet. …It is prized because it is thought to give unquestionable authenticity and authority to a specific procedure to be carried out in the school room. (p. 15)*

Blueprints for instrumental action in education are problematic because they assume that children are lifeless matter. I can offer you a blueprint for making a model plane. I cannot offer you a blueprint for making a socialized human being. Objectivist language games forget that, as Heidegger (1996) would say, "…the person exists only in carrying out intentional acts, and is thus essentially *not* an object" (p. 44-5).

Dewey (1929) critiques the tendency to frame educational science merely as a means of standardizing practice: “The human desire to prove that the scientific mode of attack is really of value brings pressure to convert scientific conclusions into rules and standards of schoolroom practice” (p.18). A science of education does not offer simple pedagogical recipes. It furnishes epistemological tools. Dewey (1929) writes, “If we retain the word ‘rule’ at all, we must say that scientific results furnish a rule for the conduct of observations and inquiries, not a rule for overt action.” (p. 30). The purpose of a science in education is to offer conceptual tools for progress in educational practice. “There is no science without abstraction, and abstraction means fundamentally that certain occurrences are removed from the dimension of familiar practical experience into that of reflective or theoretical inquiry” (p. 16). Critical theory may offer action researchers ways and means of removing educational practices into the domain of reflective inquiry for the purpose of rethinking and redescribing them.

III. Critical Theory

The critical teacher action researcher intends to become and remain a more conscious human agent in the daily life of school and society. A critical theory would help teachers describe coercive practices which distort the communication structure in their classrooms. The critical theory would also help teachers describe the social and institutional determinants of their professional consciousness. Geuss (1981) writes, *“…* a critical theory makes the subjects in the society aware of their own origin. To enlighten the subjects about their own genesis or origin is just to explain to them how they became the subjects they are with the beliefs, attitudes, norms, etc. they have. The critical theory shows them under what conditions, in what ‘context,’ they acquired these beliefs, attitudes, and norms, and… how they came into being as social subjects” (p. 70).

For this reason critical teacher action researchers are interested in describing the dominant language game of their professional community. For this reason they constitute pluralistic discourse communities that debate questions such as “Why do you talk that way?” rather than merely “How do you know?” Action researchers describe how speech and action entail each other. They agree with Rorty (1989) who argues “that what matters in the end are changes in the vocabulary rather than changes in belief, changes in truth-value candidates rather than assignments of truth-value” (p. 48). For action researchers the purpose becomes to enlighten and instruct each other in a conversation that re-describes the practical consequences of our language games, and that narrativizes the mutual entailment of concrete ways of speaking and acting.

The critical action researcher understands, for example, that talk of standardized tests and blueprints for action in the classroom entail ways of engaging with children as dehumanized lifeless objects. In this instance action research would consist in showing the destructive potential of such ways of describing children and would articulate alternative language games which are arguably more ethical and more faithful to the self-image of our professional culture. It boils down to a matter of articulating our

essential values and purposes as teachers of human beings. Critical reflection may be described as a delving beneath the surface of what we are doing in the sense that critique brings us face to face with the conflicting language games which are inscribing and determining our practices. As Rorty (1989) tells us, such inquiry is moral because it "…takes the form of an answer to the question 'Who are we, how did we come to be what we are, and what might we become?' rather than an answer to the question 'What rules should dictate my actions?'" (p. 60).

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