



## Editorial

by Will Parnell

Guest Editor

Special Edition on Early Childhood Education and Phenomenology

### Dear Readers of the Indo-Pacific Journal of Phenomenology:

I hope that you will take a journey with us through the many experiences, starting places, stopping points, and continuations that present themselves in the following body of work. This special edition, comprising a unique collection of collegial work dealing with phenomenology in early childhood education, has been a long and arduously thought provoking experience. Narrations of lives, looking in on others, borrowing experiences from our own pasts, watching the children and wondering about their experiences, touching the lives of teachers, children and parents and making meaning have all threaded these life-worlds.

In our first manuscript, *Meltdown in the Midst of Beauty*, we find an existential crisis of sorts between the blurry lines of partaking as a participant but also being a researcher in an early childhood artist's studio. Learning to listen to the children's ideas and go with them on a learning journey is paramount to the transformation faced in these episodes. Sartre (1956) and Van Manen (1990) lead the author's expedition from looking in through the keyhole on others' experiences to turning around and finding others looking at your own experience. Emergence and the realization that life eats entropy become the way through the crisis.

In the second manuscript, *Crossing Boundaries*, we find the participants (and participant-researcher) writing year-long stories in preprimary classrooms based on everyday documentation as a way of

reflecting the complexity of children's experiences and the thought processes of all involved. The children's experiences and the teachers' ability to construct meaning in lines of narration about these experiences allow trust to be explored and examined at every level. Through crossing the boundaries of the teachers' viewpoint, a space is created for the development and possible rethinking of the way we tell our stories in the preprimary years and borrow the experiences of young children.

The third manuscript, *What Did You Learn in School Today*, holds powerful concepts and implications that relate directly to the early childhood world and school-life. This paper explores late adolescence and finds meaning through the voices of Swedish students in senior high school and juvenile institutions around school failure culture. The students' descriptions of a lived experience of a failure have little to do with academic limitations. Instead, these students rarely speak of failure to understand, or failure to meet pedagogic demands. Rather, the students provide stories of teachers' negative responses to social actions and behaviours; described as the 'hidden curriculum'. In the end, this paper speaks to larger implications that must live inside of all teachers, especially in early childhood education. It is these larger implications that surround the politic of relationships between teachers and students.

Manuscript four, *Birth on the Playground*, demonstrates the difficulty teachers face when documenting an extraordinary moment in everyday living. Confronted with seeing children's experiences and capturing trails and traces of those experiences in

photography and note-keeping, the participant-researcher finds herself revisiting five-year old boys playing pregnancy. This experience brings to light the complex questions about who we become through our play-acting and what becomes of our developing sense of identity. Boys taking on the experiences of pregnancy and birthing leave us wondering how this shapes being-ness, the insides of them and the resulting teacher's practices. A fantastical voyage around the implications for teachers, teaching and listening to children follows the threads of this happening.

The fifth manuscript, *Children Dwelling in the Absence of Home*, is a beautifully written paper that gives great care and detail to capturing the phenomenological aspects of children's lives. It is also very timely since the policies surrounding immigrant families in many parts of the world is such a current topic. The article gives us another view of what life can be like for children in our preprimary classrooms and could prove very useful in providing different perspectives on issues faced daily by pre-service and in-service teachers. It is easy to fall in love with this heart-felt research and know that the readers' lives are changed by encountering what the author has found and exchanged with us through this article.

The final manuscript, *Is Experimenting on an Immanent Level Possible in RECE*, moves us beyond words. We live in our own experience of reading this paper and it shifts our being. The paper feels as if it

exists somewhere in the in-between (A'Beckett, 2007) of the reader and the writer. This paper takes a very Deleuzean approach to writing and makes us re-read, take side trails on purpose, and forces connections personal to each reader. The experience of reading the paper is akin to a meandering in the woods that does not allow us go astray if we see the whole forest at some point. The multifaceted layers of experience in this paper guide us to our own power and voice; from the readers' understandings and author's personal experiences to the "welcomed guests" in *La Borde* and the preprimary educators in a political row. This paper treats desire, transcendence, imminence, and hope - mentally and physically - and carries with it a journey for the reader. As early childhood educators, we are moved to rise up in our desire and create a thundering fissure in the world to declare our entrance and stake our own claim in reconceptualizing early childhood education.

Further (so as to not create an ending but a beginning), this journey and these life-worlds hold up innovative ways of pressing into the world. The *IPJP*, and its Editor-in-Chief, have given us an opportunity to exchange in alternative conceptualizations and practices of research in early childhood education. We thank them from the depths of our hearts and minds! Re-searching the phenomenon, the experience, and the situated meaning, finds us in an unconventional paradigm; one we hope to engage, enact, interrogate, and challenge to grow rhizomatically.

## Referencing Format

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## About the Author



Professor Will Parnell is an Assistant Professor in Education and is the Pedagogical Director of the early childhood schools ([www.cdfs.pdx.edu](http://www.cdfs.pdx.edu)) at Portland State University. He also coordinates the Master's specialization in early childhood education for the Graduate School of Education's Curriculum and Instruction Department.

Will currently serves on the Portland Children's Council of Oregon, the Reconceptualizing Early Childhood Education program committee, and is a School Board member at a local charter school (The Emerson School) as well as at a private elementary school (A Renaissance School of Arts and Sciences).

Will finished his doctorate in education at PSU in 2005, and has since been researching the experiences and meaning of the Reggio-inspired studio, and children's creative expression and representational work. Will's specialty areas are making meaning of studio teaching experiences, researching environments, designs, and cultural equity in early education, as well as documenting young children's learning, and facilitating teacher narratives.

Will has been in the early education field since 1986 and has a wide background of teaching and leadership, including work in places such as lab schools, parent cooperatives, and public school settings. Serving as a consultant, he has started several schools for young children and has also been engaged with the design of children's indoor and outdoor spaces with local architects. Will's passion for learning spaces can be seen through his work in all the programs he touches.

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