Searching for Dialogue in Dance Education: A Teacher's Story

Eeva Anttila

Background

In this article, based on my dissertation, "A Dream Journey to the Unknown: Searching for Dialogue in Dance Education" (2003), I will describe several qualities, or themes, related to dialogue. These ideas may facilitate dialogue in dance education and bear significance for reflecting the nature of dialogical education more generally. In addition, my intent is to uncover the personal nature of my search for dialogue. Before describing the themes, I briefly outline the research process.

The process began in 1997 when I was invited to take part in an art education project that was situated in an elementary school in Helsinki, Finland. I was aware that I was about to turn back to something that I thought I had already left behind. I had recently completed another study concerning my own dance teaching practice (1996). I had joined the so-called teacher research movement with a desire to understand the dynamics of the teaching and learning situation in the context of dance from an experiential point of view. This movement has gained momentum in educational research since the 1980s (Cochran-Smith and Lytle 1999; Tsangaridou and Siedentop 1995). Teacher research has been greatly supported by Donald Schön's (1983, 1987) work on reflective practice. The basic idea of reflective practice is that a practitioner's competence is generated through reflections on and in lived experience. According to Richardson (1994, 5), this approach has made it possible for teachers to act as producers or mediators of knowledge instead of recipients and consumers of research.

Despite my desire to take a break from studying my own teaching, I decided to take part in this new project, which brought together classroom teachers and artist-researchers to work as partners with a specified class. This decision was based on my deep interest in the role that artistic experiences and dance play in children's well-being, an interest that

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traces back to my personal experiences in dance. This dance education project turned out to be a journey into my personal values regarding dance, art, and education. In particular, I used this study as an opportunity to reexamine my own values in dance education and the extent to which I was living these values in practice. Despite the personal nature of this journey, I hope that my story will facilitate discussion about values in dance education among practitioners and researchers in dance. Like Burdell and Swadener (1999, 25), I think that the personal can evoke the political over time and create a space for conversation, reflection, and critique.

Methodology and Procedures

This story, like most stories, is situated in a context and based on encountering others. The context here was an elementary school in eastern Helsinki that at the time of the project (1997–99) had about 35 percent of the students coming from immigrant families (the average for Finland being about 1.5 percent). Also, many families came from a disadvantaged socioeconomical status (unemployment; marital, financial, or health problems). When the two-year project began, the children I worked with were third graders (nine and ten years old). The class had twenty-four students, sixteen boys and eight girls, with little or no previous experience in dance. I met with the class for ten two-hour sessions during the first year. The second year included ten more movement sessions, storytelling sessions, and additional work toward a performance. Thinking back now, it is hard to imagine a more challenging context for a study than that which evolved.

Originally, this study was to involve questions of students' empowerment though art education. These aims are related to critical pedagogy and to an action research approach that aims at social change in a community. Thus, my starting position, or paradigm, was emancipatory and critical (Lather 1992, 89). Quite soon I realized that if a major shift in consciousness was to happen, the whole community would need to work toward these aims. Despite being part of a larger project, I still was a visiting dance teacher, and the total time I spent with the class was quite limited. Although I still thought that hearing student voices and helping them become conscious of their life situation was crucial to meaningful learning, I realized that these processes are very complicated for an individual and for a community. Thus, the idea of children's empowerment faded to the background but remained as an undercurrent throughout the project.

This study became, however, an emancipatory, self-reflective process for me. In the spirit of heuristic research that, according to Clark Moustakas, starts with "a personal challenge and puzzlement in the search to understand one's self and the world in which one lives" (1990, 15), I focused on my personal feelings, values, and experiences. However, although heuristic research is autobiographic, the issues almost always bear considerable social significance. My intention has certainly been to understand dance education from a larger perspective and to communicate this understanding to others. Thus, my story includes my documentation and discussion of the process of investigating my values, my questioning of my preconceptions, and the voices of the students

and other adults involved in the project gained through interviews, group discussions, and writing.

I structured the actual study in a way that bears resemblance to critical personal narrative and autoethnography in education, following Burdell and Swadener (1999, 21). They characterize this kind of research as multivocal and poststructural in form. Autoethnography is a form of personal narrative that places the self within a social context. Carolyn Ellis and Arthur P. Bochner (2000) define it as an autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness and connects the personal to the cultural. Shifting focus, autoethnographers look both outward at social and cultural aspects of their personal experience and inward, exposing a vulnerable self. Revealing the researcher's feelings and personal reactions is an essential quality, even in ethnography and in all qualitative research. Harry F. Wolcott, a prominent ethnographer, says that qualitative research has brought researchers back into the research setting, which has been "healthy for all" (1990, 131). Autoethnography is usually written in the first-person voice but can take a variety of forms. Ellis and Bochner add that these texts are composed of concrete action, dialogue, emotion, and embodiment (2000, 739).

I created a chronological narrative covering the entire two-year project and included accounts of my students and other teachers in it. I gathered the accounts by interviewing all students individually twice. I also had the children write two essays, conducted storytelling sessions with the children, and discussed the project with the teachers and the musician who worked with me, as well as the principal of the school. I audiotaped and transcribed all interviews and discussions.

This narrative became quite detailed as I followed Wolcott's (1990, 130–31) advice on reporting fully. Recording accurately and reporting fully are among his suggested lines of action in trying "not to get it all wrong." Although "getting it right" in qualitative research is impossible in the sense of scientific accuracy or correctness, he suggests that there are ways to make sure that qualitative researchers are not getting it all wrong (Wolcott 1990, 126–27).

Being a novice in using other people's accounts in research, I did not attempt to interpret their words in a methodologically orthodox sense. Their words were to me a window to otherness, an escape from my own head, or a shift of focus. I took the liberty to reflect on their words, to reveal what happens in my mind when I hear them. These reflections, however, were mere suggestions of what their words might mean for them. In the dissertation (Anttila 2003) from which this article is drawn, letting the readers see for themselves, as Wolcott (1990, 129–30) suggests, was a way for me to suspend the accuracy of my interpretations. The brevity necessary for this article greatly reduces the data that can be included; therefore, I focus more on my own reflections and conclusions.

The Purpose of the Study and the Research Questions

Because of the autobiographical nature of this study, it is important to note where I began. My interest in children's life situations and their needs made me curious about such ques-

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tions as, How do I respond to students? How do they address me? How do they interact with each other? How is tension created? How do peace and tranquillity develop? How do we get into a mode where artistic experiences can happen? All these questions are related to something that Max van Manen refers to as "the interactive reality of the pedagogical moment or situation" (1991, 107). He speaks about pedagogical tact, meaning "an active intentional consciousness of thoughtful human interaction" (1995, 44). Pedagogical tact is a practical, improvisational ability to instantly act in a way that promotes the good of the other (1995, 44). Promoting the good of my students has been an important value to me throughout my teaching career; incorporating the lived experiences of my students into my classes has been an important means of accomplishing this. Van Manen claims that teachers' immediate actions in the ongoing flux of pedagogical moments are little understood in educational theories. For me, this was the precise point of my attention. My interest in the pedagogical moment and in promoting the good of my students led me to focus this story on the space between me and the other, on the space where the pedagogical moment happens.

Before starting this project I knew that I wanted to teach in a way that embodied my deepest values regarding relating to my students. I found language for the kind of relationship I was seeking in theoretical literature by authors such as Martin Buber (1947, 1937/1970) and Paulo Freire (1972, 1996, 1998a, 1998b). A key concept for both of them was *dialogue,* and I soon realized that dialogue is the key in understanding the pedagogical moment and children's experiences. Both Buber and Freire see dialogue as more than a method that brings people into a communicative relationship. Dialogue is a quality of human life and, as such, an aim of education. Buber's basic premise is that human beings become persons through relationships to others and to the world. Becoming a person happens through relating and associating; in contrast, becoming an ego happens through separation from others (Buber 1937/1970, 112). Freire claims that "dialogism is a requirement of human nature and also a sign of the educator's democratic stand" (1998b, 92). The meaning of *dialogue* greatly expanded for me during the course of the study.

With my increasing interest in the implications of dialogue as Buber and Freire discuss it, I wanted to use the concept of dialogue as a guide to my pedagogical practice and lens for examining the pedagogical moments within the project. The approach that developed was characterized by a heightened interest in children's lives and experiences, where Buber's ideas of *inclusion*—that is, experiencing from the other side—and *turning toward the other* became focal. Moreover, as this was a dance project, dialogue became very much an embodied act. This bodily dialogue includes inner and outer movement of turning toward the other, sensing, feeling, and listening, as well as bodily involvement with other bodies, as in touch and contact work. I also wanted to support my students in exploring this kind of sensitivity toward their own felt experiences and toward others. Moreover, my strong interest in their experiences transformed my pedagogical practice in terms of structure and control. As I wanted to support their paths toward inner authority, autonomy, and responsibility, my pedagogical approach softened and became less controlled and structured. This led to greater appreciation of play and imagination.

Dialogue in Dance Education: Thematic Reflections

One of the tasks of my study was to describe how dialogue appeared in this particular dance project by discerning qualities of interaction that may be related to dialogue. I approached this task by creating the chronological narrative that I briefly described earlier. It is impossible to summarize this detailed document here. Instead, I will focus on an interpretive function in the study related to questions of meaning: What does dialogue mean for me and to others who have been involved in this project? I approached this task through *thematic reflections.* These reflections interrupt the narrative in the actual study. They are supported by accounts from people who were involved in this project and by theory. I present here key ideas that I discovered through the reflective work. I substantiate these ideas with data (which I translated from the original Finnish) to provide readers with the possibility of seeing the bases for my reflections. The reflections revolve around themes of *play, friendship, sensing, time, silence, imagination,* and *respect.* These themes appeared gradually throughout the research process and were based on a variety of empirical, theoretical, and experiential material, as well as on conversations with my fellow researchers, colleagues, and mentors.

Two qualities that appeared as prerequisites for the process of facilitating dialogue emerged very early and effortlessly and may seem self-evident. These were *curiosity* and *security.* In this particular project curiosity, or interest in others' experiences, was my starting point. As my desire was to create a dialogical relationship with each student, I wanted to get to know each one of them—their hopes, fears, and desires. I began this project with a sense of openness toward the children's experiences; at the same time, I carefully studied my personal needs and desires in order to be truthful with myself and the students.

Security, or an atmosphere of trust, seemed to be especially important in facilitating individual expression and ideas, which were the starting points for creative work. Most students did not have previous experiences in artistic expression and dance. In the early phases of the project, as well as in the interviews, I witnessed their feelings of insecurity in the formal educational setting and among peers. I felt responsible for facilitating an atmosphere of trust in the dance classes.

The first more ambiguous theme that began to emerge was *play.* The children's hunger for play was so compelling that it seemed to surpass all other aims. This became evident, for example, when I let them suggest activities in some classes. They always suggested movement games. The more I let them play these games, the more they asked for them, to such an extent that I started to feel uneasy about my classes becoming too playful and not about learning dance. Also, when I interviewed the children, many of them brought up this issue, although I did not specifically ask questions about play. For instance, one boy said that he liked recess the best in school because "we always play all kinds of things there." Another boy explained why he liked indoor physical education (P.E.) better than outdoor P.E.: "Outdoors P.E. is such that we have to run all the time and do this and do that and we have to take part in everything and all that . . . and then there [in outdoor P.E.] we don't play so fun games as in indoor P.E."

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I began to wonder if playfulness is a prerequisite for meaningful dance experiences, or any meaningful experiences, for children. I started to pay attention to children's deep involvement in playing and its significance in their lives. I also started to think that dance education could be more closely connected to play and found that other studies (Lindqvist 2001; Stinson 1997) pointed in the same direction.

My initial reflections on play generated an intriguing question to pursue further: Is play basically dialogical in its nature? Play may be a direct and satisfying way for children to relate to others and to the world. Thus, playfulness can be seen in a different light. Instead of relaxation, recreation, or recovery from work, it can be seen as the core of meaningful learning and meaningful life. According to Johan Huizinga (1938/1984), the significance of play lies in its power to renew human culture. Seemingly about recuperation and fun, children's play and peer culture may be a serious issue for preserving and reproducing human culture.

Early on in the project I became quite fascinated with the children's own culture and wanted to understand it better. I intended to build a bridge from their peer culture to our class and attempted to approach this by introducing thematic work on *friendship*. I thought that friendship would be a great theme to work with since it is something to which everybody could relate. However, the children appeared restless and inattentive when I introduced this theme, as if they did not want me, a teacher and an adult, to interfere in this part of their lives. Of course, this is only one interpretation of their apparent disinterest.

This unsuccessful effort led me to contemplate the nature of peer culture more profoundly and to realize that peer culture has values of its own. According to Holmes (1998, 44), peer culture exists outside the realm of the adult world. Although adults maintain school as an institution, children manage to sustain and transmit cultural knowledge to their schoolmates. Corsaro (1997, 155) claims that children also attempt to resist the adult world by challenging adult authority. Moreover, pre-adolescents are especially sensitive to what they see as adult hypocrisy and injustice. He says that "friendship processes are seen as deeply embedded in children's collective, interpretative reproduction of their cultures" (149).

In order to understand the children's conception of friendship, I asked their classroom teacher to have them write an essay about friendship. In their essays many children described friendship through negation: who is *not* a friend, or what a good friend *does not* do. One boy, for instance, wrote that "one of my best friends is Walter because he does not tease." Also, their conception of friendship seemed to be very concrete and embodied. It consisted of doing certain things, like helping, playing, and making the other laugh, and not doing certain other things, like hitting or teasing, as in the following account: "Friendship is that one does not fight with the mate and tease the other. A good friend is such that he plays with me and does fun things." On the other hand, friendship also seemed to mean certain qualities for them, such as kindness, helpfulness, supportiveness, trust, consideration, and caring. One girl wrote, "I play and take dogs out with my friends. Happy dear and sometimes sad. Nice does not quarrel and swear that is what a good friend is like." The children seemed to have an intuitive understanding about the

meaning of friendship. I realized that this understanding did not necessarily support them in their social relationships within the class as a whole.

This group of children appeared to severely lack social skills, and this often made it difficult for me to maintain order during the dance class, let alone enhance dialogical relationships among the children. Supporting constructive cooperation while respecting the dynamics of children's peer culture became great challenges for me in this project and something that I needed to address before I could proceed toward facilitating dialogue among them.

Buber's ideas concerning friendship helped me to understand children's peer culture better. They were also crucial in comprehending the particular nature of dialogue in education. The concept of inclusion has been central here. Inclusion means "experiencing the other side" (Buber 1947, 96). For Buber, friendship is a dialogical relationship that is characterized by *complete mutuality and mutual inclusion.* Thus, in friendship, *both persons experience from both sides.*

It is important to underline here that according to Buber, not all dialogical relationships consist of mutual inclusion and that relationships that are characterized by *one-sided inclusion* have not lost anything of their dialogical character (Buber 1937/1970, 178). In Buber's thinking, relation in education is based on the *one-sided* experience of inclusion. This means that when the educator practices inclusion, he or she takes part in the students' experiences of being educated but cannot expect that the students can or should "experience the educating of the educator" (Buber 1947, 100).

Buber's ideas have led me to think that as a teacher I can support students' growth in social skills by practicing inclusion in my relations with them. In this way, I may nurture and awaken the capability for inclusion in my students. This does not mean, however, that I should expect everyone to become friends with each other.

I started to wonder how children who are not friends with each other could live, work, and play together in a more wholesome manner. In the context of dance, it is obvious that the body and physical activity are significant in providing children with opportunities to interact constructively with each other. The idea of bodily dialogue started to gain significance in this process. Thus, my next thematic reflection considered the body and *sensing* as a basis of dialogue. Throughout my career as a dance educator I have considered focusing on the present moment and on bodily sensations to be very important in the process of learning dance. In this particular context, a state of focused bodily presence was sometimes very difficult to reach. The children's lack of sensitivity to subtle bodily experiences was apparent, for example, in their haphazard vocalizing during activities, in bodily limpness, or in using excess speed or force in moving. All this made me puzzled about the nature of the children's lived experiences; it appeared to me that their bodies were somehow detached from their minds and that it was difficult for them to consciously attend to and control their bodies.

As the project proceeded I witnessed how becoming bodily involved with other bodies through touch and contact work helped the children to reach a focused, intensified bodily state. Through simple weight-giving and weight-bearing exercises they appeared to be more focused and more able to connect to their bodily sensations. My reflections when

watching the videotaped classes include thoughts like, "Maybe in partner work sensing the body becomes more concrete?" Their sustained interest in these tasks and willingness to share their accomplishments with me—evidenced, for example, in their calling for me to come to watch them closely—made me inclined to think that physical contact was significant in becoming connected to bodily sensations. Of course, it is impossible to know whether they experienced this connection or not. In the interviews I asked the children specific questions regarding partner work and touching. Based on their verbal accounts I concluded that their attitudes toward these activities were positive but a little hesitant. Their wording reflected more a surprise or wondering what this new thing was, as they used words like "odd," "strange," and "funny" in describing how they felt. One girl said about being lifted by someone, "I am quite much, I was like tense," and one boy told me that "sometimes it feels even good when someone touches."

Touching seemed to be something new to them, at least in a school context. Touching, at least gentle touching, is probably something that is considered to belong to the sphere of family life, not school life. Based on these children's limited experiences yet positive attitude, touching seems to be undervalued as an educational medium, at least in this particular school. This thought has made me increasingly concerned about the message that children may learn through formal education. If they learn that touching others is "strange" or "odd," and that it is normal not to touch others gently or to be touched, a significant way of relating to others is neglected. A gentle, sensitive, and responsive touch may lead to an embodied act of inclusion, experiencing from the other side what I described earlier. In touch, feeling the contact from both sides is possible.

The significance of bodily experiences in forming a sense of self and a sense of agency, in feeling emotions, and in comprehending the world around us seems to be vaguely understood despite the advances in research in the area. Some recent findings in neuroscience, especially Damasio's (1994, 1999) work, strongly supports the falsification of the body/mind split; developments in somatic theories and phenomenology work toward the same conclusion (Fraleigh 2000, Green 2001, Shapiro 1999). Based on these developments, I propose that the process of becoming a conscious subject happens in a constant flow of interaction with the world, and much of this interaction is nonverbal.

Understanding the bodily basis of our existence and the primacy of the relationship between the body and its environment in the development of a human being may bear significance in understanding how to educate—that is, promote the good of the child. I suggest that educating "a conscious body" means, first, supporting awareness of subtle bodily sensations that can be depicted as dialogue within our bodies, or an inner dialogue. A conscious connection to bodily actions and sensations may lead to a sense of personal agency and ownership of the body. This inner, wordless dialogue mediates our experiences in relation to the outer world. This may lead to a bodily understanding of, for example, injustice and oppression and, thus, toward appreciation of our bodily integrity. We should learn to hear what our bodies tell us about such sensations as pleasure, pain, and discomfort, to relate sensations to our feelings, and, eventually, to understand right or wrong. Moreover, sensing and dialoguing with our own bodies may lead to sensing and understanding and respecting others' bodily existence and their bodily integrity.

The next theme that became significant during the process concerned *time* and pedagogical efficiency. As I became more self-reflexive and critically aware of my teaching, I noticed that my classes were very structured; although most tasks were open ended, I was in control of the use of time and structure of the class. I also noticed that often there was a feeling of haste. One student suggested this in an interview, stating that in my classes: "We managed to do three [or] four different things we did that rolling and everything . . . we could do a little less." Gradually, this awareness generated a shift in my teaching. My use of time changed and my teaching became less structured. As I was searching for dialogue, I started to realize that I was mostly limited by my own thinking. A journal entry reflects this process: "Can I plan at all—do I dare not to plan? What if I would just let go and trust my intuition. But planning creates security. Does it limit dialogue?"

I became anxious to see how far the children could take themselves in terms of being responsible. Toward the end of the project, I indeed witnessed moments when I felt that the process was carrying itself and the children were taking responsibility. For example, when rehearsing a small piece of choreography that we were to show to the children's parents, some children took initiative in either suggesting improvements to the choreography or in encouraging their peers to concentrate and focus.

The next thematic reflection revolves around *silence,* which is also related to power, control, and autonomy. Earlier I described the children's inability to control their bodies. Another problem was that involvement in physical activity was often connected with loud voices. The children also seemed accustomed to using loud voices when trying to get another's attention, and their manner of solving conflicts by yelling troubled me. Also, my own hollering bothered me increasingly. As I longed for quiet and peaceful moments, I discovered that silence is a central concept in dialogue, since silence denotes listening. According to Freire, "In the process of speaking and listening, the discipline of silence, which needs to be developed with serious intent by subjects who speak and listen, is a sine qua non of dialogical communication" (1998a, 105). Thus, silence became a pathway toward dialogue. I encouraged the children to learn to move without making sounds and changed my own use of voice, a change similar to my use of time. I somehow grasped that the key to silence is not imposing silence—that is, silencing—but being more silent myself. Gradually, the children started to move more calmly and quietly.

These insights also made me more conscious of the meaning of my agenda to the children. The spirit of dialogical education entails the teacher basing the content of pedagogy on themes that are meaningful for the students. As an educator I was bearing responsibility but willing to share as much power as the children were able to take and use constructively. I realized that the tone of voice also carries a message. An imposing and commanding voice suggests that power resides in the teacher. A soft voice, on the other hand, may send a message of trust, respect, and caring. In an attempt to communicate my willingness to share power and to listen to what the students have to say, I started to pay more attention to the tone of my voice.

Connecting sensing with silence and listening generated another insight. In my experience, silence makes it easier to receive signals from within the body; it makes dialogue with one's own body, music, and the sound environment possible; and it helps establish

dialogue with others. Moving with a listening attitude may also lead to a respectful attitude toward other movers in the same space.

Another significant theme that I discovered was *imagination.* Imagination as a mode of thought is a bridge between play and art. Imagination was also a way for me to connect with the children's lived experiences. Searching for common ground became increasingly important as I sought for ways to connect them with each other in a constructive way. In order to do this, I had to let go of my structured plans and ideas and give the children's ideas more space. According to Maxine Greene, this kind of educational approach may mean reaching beyond what is given; in this way, "a person may become freed to glimpse what might be, to form notions of what should be and what is not yet" (1995, 19). Education, then, becomes a mutual search. Greene suggests that the arts play a crucial role in this search: "Through proffering experiences of the arts and storytelling, teachers can keep seeking connection points among their personal histories and the histories of those they teach" (42). In this light, art can be seen as treasuring our capacity to play and imagine.

Through storytelling, drawing, and other activities, each student took part in creating a dance piece to perform for their parents. This performance project brought life and meaning into the project as the children's imaginative worlds and irrational ideas became integrated in the physical work. Children's capacities for transformation and imaginative play, as well as the relationship between children's play and artistic expression, became manifest in this phase of the project; the earlier reflections of play and time worked together with this new theme of imagination. The dance piece we created was about fifteen minutes long and included live music played by the children themselves with support from a live musician. Each child created his or her own character and participated in creating the choreography and the underlying narrative. The costumes, props, and stage setting were designed and largely crafted by the children. The characters that they created included quite realistic animal characters (for example, two panda bears, a leopard, a kangaroo, a crocodile), and imaginary characters (a "two-face" and a ghost). These characters were integrated in a loosely drafted plot that was created by movement improvisation and storytelling. The title of the performance, "A Dream Journey to the Unknown," reflects the central idea of the piece: It was a dream in which different creatures were stranded in a strange, unfamiliar place. The story was about fearing the unknown, the strange, and the different and about conquering those fears. As these themes arose from the children's imagination, they reflected, for me, their view of the world as unstable, unsafe, and unpredictable.

During this process of creating the performance I encountered the children's world as it revealed itself to me. In storytelling sessions I met with the children in a small room in pairs. The intimacy of this setting apparently supported them in letting their imagination fly, and they also seemed to be secure enough to reveal feelings, like fear, to me. During the movement sessions that accompanied this process, the children displayed courage, creativity, and cooperation in ways that I had not seen in the earlier phases of the project. For example, they created new movement sequences in small groups that initiated changes in the choreography and became incorporated into the performance.

Some children demonstrated leadership in the rehearsal process, reminding others of the sequence and about rehearsal discipline. A barrier was broken and a steady stream of new ideas and inventive ways of moving flowed freely. Their world of play and imagination seemed distant from the world of logic and reason, and it tempted me with its vividness. Fascinated, I observed all this and occasionally picked out movements and ideas to develop further and to include in the piece.

I was committed to not making this my project or my dance, and, therefore, I refrained from taking the leader's position. This nonimposing approach seemed to be counterproductive as far as visible progress in dancing, sometimes generated disciplinary problems, and made me seriously contemplate the meaning of *respect.* I thought that problems in self-discipline—that is, some children's difficulties in focusing when I was not actively leading the process—were related to a lack of agency or inner authority. They also may have been related to a lack of meaning in life and in school that some children revealed to me in the interviews. One boy, for instance, said that he thinks that there is no purpose in going to school other than getting a job and earning money in the future. I searched for ways to make this project meaningful for the children while remaining aware that meaning could not be imposed on them.

Following Freire's advice that "it's in making decisions that we learn to decide" (1998a, 97), I realized that inner authority cannot be reached by constantly relying on outer authority—that is, someone else making decisions for you. Through reflective work, I made a connection between inner authority and sensing, listening, and freedom; sensing one's own body supports a sense of connectedness and self-understanding. In this way, self-respect may grow, and self-respect is a basis for respecting others.

At times the children seemed to get in touch with their inner authority. There were moments of self-directed work, as I described earlier, when they began to invent new ways to move and worked together in creating these movements. For instance, they practiced "pyramids" together, as well as different circle formations and jumps over each other. This was how many movements for the performance were created.

In the process of making decisions related to the piece and the performance, the children and I did not always reach a consensus. We discussed the discipline of rehearsing, which includes repetition and waiting, and made contracts about how to proceed. Some children were impatient and some were opposed to performing, but through negotiation they accepted the fact that most children wanted to rehearse and perform. In this way, conflicts were resolved. I felt that even during these conflicts I was able to stay connected to my values and, especially, to my aspiration of respecting children's experiences and views. My tone was not always gentle and caring, then, and the content of our discussions was not always positive. We had tough negotiations, even some voting. This experience generated the insight that dialogue does not mean that living together is uncomplicated, and that dialogue can also be characterized by firmness. The resolving of our negotiations often cleared the air so that we could move forward.

Buber describes an incident that reminds me of my experiences with the children. He writes about a "broken-off conversation" among Christians and Jews that he was a part of himself: "I protested against the protest . . . I directly addressed the former clergyman.

He stood up, I too stood, we looked into the heart of another's eyes. 'It is gone', he said, and before everyone we gave another the kiss of brotherhood. . . . In this transformation dialogue was fulfilled. Opinions were gone, in a bodily way the factual took place" (1947, 5–6). In a similar way, the children and I did not always reach a consensus or understand each other completely. But sometimes we encountered each other eye to eye, with a presence encountering another presence, seriously and totally. When we did, things became resolved and peace was restored.

Summary and Concluding Reflections

When I embarked on this search for dialogue in dance education, I had a preconception of what dialogue means. During the course of the journey my reflections and judgments became more coherent as my understanding of dialogue evolved, supported by discussions with fellow researchers, reading literature related to dialogue, and working with the empirical material that I had collected. Through this process I started to distinguish qualities like sensing, listening, and respect that have led me toward understanding dialogue.

Although understanding and describing the possibilities and characteristics connected to dialogue is possible, organizing these qualities is difficult because they are in constant movement in relation to each other. This is why dialogue cannot be reduced to a methodology where doing one thing leads to another. Figure 1 illuminates my current understanding of the weblike nature of dialogue. This web consists of various pathways and alternative routes that were generative of dialogue in my study. I understand it as a map of possibilities. Curiosity and security, the first steps into the web, create a *dialogical atmosphere* that opens up the possibility for dialogue. Within this kind of atmosphere, dialogue can be entered into and further deepened through any of the other aspects indicated on the diagram, and likely others as well. Thus, each pathway toward dialogue is unique.

In addition to discerning qualities or themes related to dialogue, it is possible to imagine dialogue happening in different spheres: it can be a private or public event, or it can be mutual or one-sided. Buber (1937/1970, 56–57) described the private sphere as the first kind of relation. In my study, sensing and silence were essential in allowing bodily awareness, which I conceive of as inner and largely nonverbal dialogue. I treasure this kind of dialogue and think it might be crucial in all education. Becoming in touch with one's own inner sensations is especially important in dance education. It facilitates development of expressive skills, allowing one to better communicate meaning to others through movement. In this way, bodily, inner dialogue extends beyond the private sphere.

The second sphere of relation, dialogue among human beings, grows from the private sphere. One essential insight concerning the nature of dialogue is that dialogue among human beings is fundamentally embodied and nonverbal. Another is that dialogue can happen in different tones and intensities, like softness and firmness, warmness and coolness.

Dialogue can also be understood as a network of relationships in which each individual in a group builds multiple dyadic relationships within the group. A point that seems to me

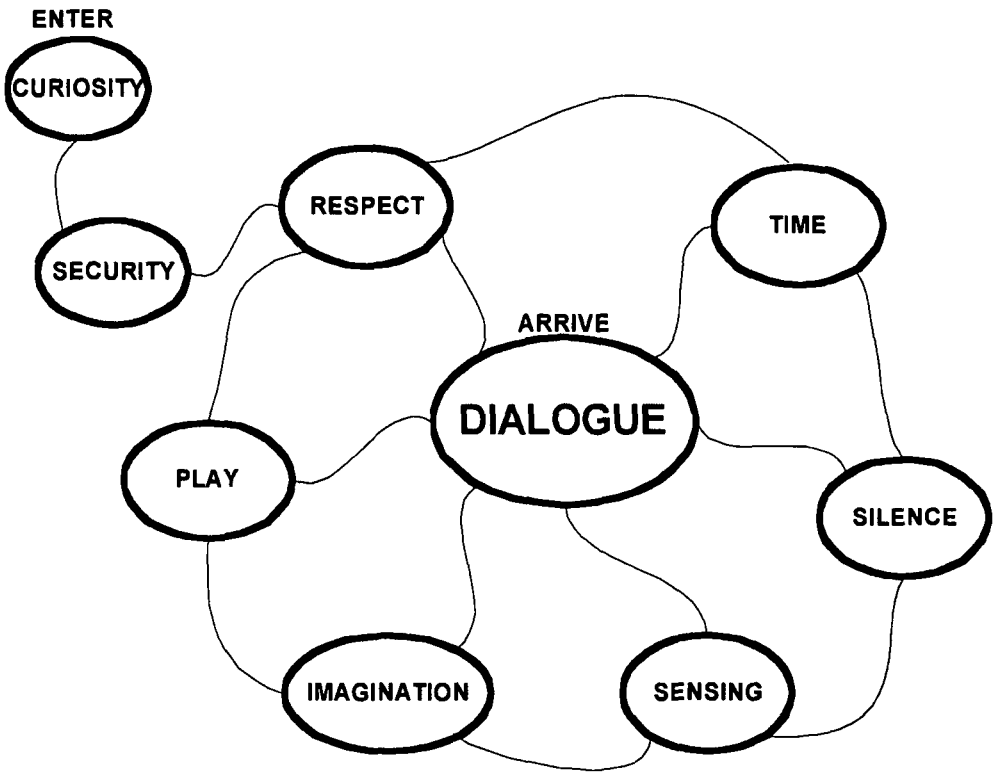

Figure 1. Mapping possible pathways towards dialogue.

to be too rarely discussed is that a relationship of trust between the teacher and each student is not enough for a truly constructive and communal life within a group of students. Through this project I realized that in order to make dialogue possible within the group, I needed to support dialogical relationships among the students. I did this by bringing the students into encounters with each other, including respectful touching and other kinds of bodily encounters. I tried to facilitate listening and responding in our discussions, and we engaged in concrete work toward mutual aims. Based on these experiences, I believe that a dialogical network gets constructed gradually through working and doing things together. I think that this insight has significance for all education.

My final remarks concern the possibility and nature of dialogue in education. Buber and Freire share the view that, although education should have a purpose and a direction, the content and direction of education should be determined in and through dialogue instead of being predetermined. Thus, dialogue becomes a significant ingredient in purposeful education, if not its most essential quality. My starting point in this work was that education is about promoting the good of the other. I have concluded that, just as it is impossible to know what is good for oneself without inner dialogue, it is impossible to know what is good for the other without dialogue. The following statement from Buber expresses what I feel is the essence of dialogue in education: "Now he [the educator] no longer interferes, nor does he merely allow things to happen. He *listens* to that which grows, to the way of Being in the world . . . he *encounters*" (Buber 1937/1970, 109; emphasis added).

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I hope that by sharing this project I will encourage other dance educators to search for dialogue in their work and life, to do research on their own practice, investigate and question their values and presuppositions, and share their stories. I strongly believe that this can deepen understanding and appreciation of ourselves, our students, and the teaching profession.

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