CHAPTER 10

RECONCEPTUALIZING EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Challenging Taken-for-Granted Ideas

Hillevi Lenz Taguchi
Stockholm Institute of Education

We must begin *wherever we are*...in the text where we already believe ourselves to be. (Derrida, 1976, p.162)

"WHAT DO YOU DO AFTER YOU'VE MET POSTSTRUCTURALISM?"

In 1995 Jeanette Rhedding-Jones published an article titled *"What Do You Do after You've Met Poststructuralism?"* In this chapter I want to show how a poststructuralist-inspired, theoretically multidimensional, and inclusionary approach to learning theories and the practices that arise from them challenge the still-prevalent modernist idea of articulating one grand learning theory for postmodern education.

Nordic Childhoods and Early Education, pages 257–287

Poststructural Theory and Its "Linguistic Turn"

Poststructural theory, as in *after (post)* structuralism, took a decidedly linguistic turn away from the idea of uncovering essential and fundamentally unchangeable human traits as mental or societal structures, suggesting instead that anything we think we know about ourselves or the world is simply constructed and formulated meanings in different forms of human expressions and languaging. Nothing can be understood in any kind of way, without being given a meaning; that is, without being *languaged* ("textualized").

Even the shapes and functions of the body have adapted to the meanings we have given them in specific cultures and contexts (Butler, 1993). The body *is* materialized meanings, as is femininity, masculinity, sexuality, childhood, and, for that matter, all forms of pedagogical practice. This illustrates a refusal to polarize and separate what is an unconditional and unchangeable nature, and our meaning-making/knowledge of it. Therefore, poststructuralism aims to dissolve one of the most fundamental Western bipolar logics: the subject–object bipolarity.

Poststructuralism is also a move away from 20th century dominant constructivist learning theory, in education as in other social sciences. Instead of a separate subject making meaning of the object, as in constructivist theory, the subject–object dichotomy is dissolved and everything is materialized meaning and meaning materialized. It becomes impossible to clearly separate what is the object in itself and what is our materialized, textualized meaning-making of it. Such poststructuralist epistemological reasoning makes sense when we consider that the same object or phenomena is understood differently in different meaning-making contexts within cultures and even more so between different cultural contexts. Thereby, as the French philosopher Derrida (1976) has stated, everything is *"text."* This shift is what is more commonly understood as "the linguistic turn."

Swedish Early Childhood Education: The Reggio Inspiration

In this chapter I try to give an answer to Jeanette Rhedding-Jones's question in relation to what has happened in parts of Swedish early childhood education, commonly dedicated to what has been called the "Reggio Emilia inspiration" (Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence, 1999). This approach to teaching and learning reflects new theories of learning and knowledge that emerged after the linguistic turn in poststructural theory in the humanities, social, and educational sciences (Davies, 1997; Dickens & Fontana, 1994; Silverman, 1993; Steier, 1991; Uscher & Edwards, 1994).

The Swedish State Early Childhood Curriculum, published in 1998 (Lpfö-98), calls for a constructivist approach, but also includes ideas about cooperative learning, thus transgressing into a more poststructural way of understanding knowledge and learning. ECE practitioners inspired by the preschool practice in the Italian city of Reggio Emilia have successfully animated constructivist theory in their daily practice, with a view of children as investigators of the world and constructors of their own knowledge (e.g., Bruner, 1996; Gardner, 1985; Marton & Booth, 1997; Pramling Samuelsson & Asplund, 2003; Säljö, 2000). But they have also challenged themselves toward a practice that makes sense only with the help of poststructural discourse of materialized meaning-making, *as well as* with a view of the child as a co-constructor of culture and knowledge (Dahlberg et al., 1999; Lenz Taguchi, 2000; Lind, 2004; Project Zero & Reggio Children, 2001).

Since the first municipal preschools were built at the end of World War II, early childhood practitioners in the northern Italian city of Reggio Emilia have undertaken a political quest by making the children's understandings and meaning-making of the world around them visible to the local community, with the help of what is usually conceptualized as pedagogical documentation. But the documentation is not used just to make the children visible and their voices hearable in a political sense, but also to enforce the cooperative, meaning-making processes in groups of children, their parents, and early childhood teachers.[1] These practitioners would, however, not "confess" to any specific learning theory, but rather to a careful selection of "excellence" from a multitude of theories representing many different disciplines, as well as artistic and poetic languaging and imagery that cannot be scientifically classified. This can be theorized as an inclusionary approach in line with poststructural theory (Lenz Taguchi, 2003, 2004; Rinaldi, 2001) and constitutes a movement into a use of pedagogical documentation as a tool for what I have called the "practice of an ethic of resistance" (Lenz Taguchi, 2000, 2003, 2004).

An Ethic of Resistance: Deconstructing What We Already "Know"

An ethic of resistance refers to conscious acts of thinking deeply about the assumptions and taken-for-granted notions we bring with us (often without awareness) as we engage in our daily work with children. As we practice an ethic of resistance, we deconstruct, or take apart, what we "know to be true," to reflect on it, analyze it, criticize it, and resist its seductive powers arising from its familiarity.

But this deconstruction also has an ethical dimension. Once we have deconstructed our assumptions, thought critically about them, resisted

them, and come to different understandings, we often face professional decisions with an inextricable ethical component. Once I revisit and revise what I "know" about how children think and learn, or about what approach I should use to help them grow, then I may be ethically obliged to change what I actually do with them. Based on my new understandings, I cannot ethically continue with my old practices. And neither can I stop with my new understandings. I am ethically obligated to continue to examine my practices, always looking for better ways to "do good" for these particular children with whom I am working.

To be able to do deconstructional work in an ethic of resistance, we need documents to work with. The concept of pedagogical documentation refers to any kind of document from pedagogical practice—anything from a videotaped sequence, photographs, taped conversations between children investigating something, notes or observations from children's work, to the materialized and explorative thinking of the children manifested as drawings or constructions in different materials such as clay, trash materials, or sand. From a pedagogical perspective, documentation is not simply to capture or make visible a memory from the past (retrospective), but rather, to enable us to analyze and deconstruct, and to be able to make choices for possible learning processes tomorrow (prospective). These documents, then, become active "agents" in planning new learning challenges and preconditions for further cooperative and investigative work and play among the children.

Working deconstructively with documentation means that we can analyze how children and we ourselves, as early childhood educators, understand what is taking place, or, as I would say in a poststructural discourse, what discursively informs the children, as well as the preschool teachers. This way of deconstructively *reading the text* of the documents helps us make visible or, so to speak, tell the story of teachers' daily practice, which, in turn, provides a concrete starting point for thinking deeply about these practices and their philosophical or theoretical underpinnings. To be able to change and develop practice as an ethical learning environment for all children we must, as Jacques Derrida stated in the quote above, "*begin wherever we are...* in the text where we already believe ourselves to be" (1976, p. 162).

Simply put, preschool teachers participating in reconceptualizing early childhood education in Sweden are actively engaged in displacing "teaching truths" in favor of teaching more ethically and in a displaced sense more "truthfully." In this chapter I illustrate this reconceptualization concretely through examples from two preschools in the Stockholm area. I will not provide theoretical overview of major aspects of reconceptualizations in ECE after the linguistic turn; but rather, I will show what such reconceptualizations can be all about in everyday preschool practice. In the first example, I illustrate the practice of an ethic of resistance, with a focus on the processes of the preschool teachers themselves. In the second example, I will spotlight children's learning processes.

Draw a Map of Who You Want to Change Places With

The preschool in the first example is located in a suburb south of Stockholm in a middle-class area. The preschool serves about 38 children age 1–5, with about 16 children in the younger group (1- and 2-year-olds), and about 22 children in the older group (3- to 5-year-olds). About three full-time preschool teachers, called pedagogues in Sweden, work with each group, taking turns eight hours each, between 7:00 AM and 6:00 PM Monday through Friday. The following example from this preschool illustrates how teachers reconstructed their practice.

At this preschool, a group of 10 five-year-olds ate lunch each day at a certain table, always seated in the same places. The table was located in the art studio area, where other children were also engaged in a project designed to help them develop spatial knowledge and orientation within their immediate everyday surroundings. Some children were seated on the floor, drawing maps to show their routes to the preschool from home. Other children were drawing maps to a hidden treasure—freshly baked cinnamon rolls—in the park adjacent to the preschool. Over a period of several days, two of the 5-year-old girls repeatedly asked if it were possible for them to change places at the lunch table. The preschool teachers decided to incorporate this request into the ongoing spatial orientation project by adding a map-drawing task. The children immediately agreed to the new assignment responding to the teacher's request: "Please draw a map to the person you want to change places with. Don't tell anyone who it is while you are working, so we can guess later" (Lenz Taguchi, 1997). The children engaged in the task, some with ease, getting started right away and finishing quickly. Others put more time and energy into the task, thinking long and hard or adding more detail into their drawings. However, all of the children ultimately produced a drawing and showed great interest in how seating at the table would eventually turn out. The session was documented with videotaping and photographs of the drawings.

Later the children met in even smaller groups of three to four children to read each others' maps and discuss various possible interpretations of the maps. In these meetings the children debated and cooperatively reflected upon concepts like "opposite from me" in relation to "on the opposite side of the table," as well as on graphical symbols like arrows and lines and how they should be interpreted in this context. The result of these meetings was that children expanded their knowledge of how a map

can be made and what it communicates to others, which inspired them to more map-drawing. The children changed places at the lunch table after long debates on how to satisfy everyone's wishes, which wasn't possible without compromises among the children.

Multiple "Readings" of the Children's Map-Drawings

The teachers analyzed the map-drawings in four different ways. (In poststructural discourse, I would refer to these ways of analyzing as four different "readings" of the map-drawings.) Directly after the assignment, the teachers discussed how the children reacted to the assignment and the kinds of maps they created. Their goal was to use this analysis as a foundation for planning the next day's activities, especially to find ways to make the task more interesting and more challenging for the children. Later, the teachers continued to analyze this assignment in collaboration with me, as a researcher, and other colleagues at the site, ultimately engaging in four separate *readings* or analyses of the first day's documentation. Importantly, the teachers began *where they were* in their thinking and pedagogical practice, trying to make visible and understand what came to their minds and what they valued in the children's drawings, illustrating the crucial message in Jacques Derrida's quotation at the beginning of this chapter: *"begin wherever we are..."*

Derrida makes this statement in relation to the process, or, as I would rather talk about it, the simultaneous practical and theoretical *movement* of poststructuralist deconstruction, which has been an important inspiration for the use of documentation as a pedagogical analysis tool. By documenting their ongoing instructional practice, especially during children's investigative group work, calling for cooperative meaning-making, teachers make visible the children's learning processes and strategies, as well as their own teaching strategies and practices as they interact with, listen to, and observe the children.

It is important to note that documentation work is, at once, practical and theoretical. It both inspires and requires reflection, movement, and change. In our attempts to make meaning of what we see in any piece of documented practice, whether it be a drawing, a photograph of a child's cardboard construction, a videotaped play sequence, dialogue, or problem solving, we need to account for the notions, beliefs, values, ideas, and practices that discursively inform the children, as well as the preschool teachers themselves, that is, the tools for thinking and performing we have access to through our previous and ongoing "discursive inscriptions," in poststructural discourse, or what we usually refer to as *previous experience*. This is a process of thinking deeply and critically about staging, arranging, doing,

and analyzing our own pedagogical performances. We do multiple *readings*, or repeated analyses, trying to understand the same situation in many ways, in an effort to more thoroughly understand what we see and hear from multiple perspectives.

Multiple readings protect us from the taken-for-granted, which typically constitutes a major portion of our first reading or analysis. Here is what I did and said. Here is what the children did and said. This reflects what I am familiar with, what I know to be "true" and "right." With each iteration, though, multiple readings increase opportunities for resistance, our own resistance to the status quo in our instructional practice. "Resistance" is here *not* about opposing or simply replacing one understanding with another, which is then later abandoned. It is *not* about clinging on to particular forms of knowledge through a mistaken belief that they are the only true ones. Rather, it is about a continuous process of displacement and transgression from *within* what we already think and do; from *"where we are,"* to quote Derrida, from the understandings we have now. Such resistance is an act of ethics. Elisabeth Adams St. Pierre has written about such an ethic in the following way: *"(It) explodes anew in every circumstance, demands a specific re-inscription, and hounds praxis unmercifully"* (1997, p. 176; see also Lenz Taguchi, 2000).

In addition, multiple readings of documentation help teachers "resist" shallow evaluations of children's work, inspiring instead deeper and more thoughtful analysis of children's work, both as process and as product. This thought-filled analysis helps teachers make ethical choices about what they will do next to challenge the children appropriately to further their learning. Multiple readings help teachers think carefully about preconditions for learning for groups of children, as well as for the individuals who make up these groups. How much time will be required? What kinds of spaces? What materials? What kind of challenging questions? Multiple readings of pedagogical documentation involve a process of visualizing "where we are," enabling us to formulate other possible ways of understanding teaching and practicing it.

The readings focused on only six of the ten drawings and maps produced by the children on the day of the assignment. All four of the readings described below were conducted soon after the session with the children. However, the full meanings of these readings did not emerge until later, after repeated analyses and reflection. The analyses were conducted in a floating and crisscrossing process over a period of about a month. We met formally only two times to discuss the drawings as well as other assignments in the project, but discussions and note-taking was also taking place more or less on a daily basis. Also, one of the preschool teachers (Hjelm, 2001) investigated two of the readings by examining texts on constructivist thinking about children's map-drawings (Marton & Booth,

1997), and social-constructionist thinking about what a map is (Wood, 1992), which added extensively to the ongoing discussions and readings.

The readings were iterative and reiterative, each reading influenced by the last and influencing the next, as is the process with deconstructive discourse among teachers and their colleagues. However, I present them below as if they were separate to make them more accessible and palpable to readers who were not part of the process. It is important to understand that these readings were done cooperatively, that is, they are the result of a cooperative process, so we have no interest in showing who eventually came up with which reading. However, I will sometimes quote one person to show how we used documentation of our own discussions to make visible the taken-for-granted notions in our thinking and, thereby, help us with further *readings* (analysis). (To comply with standards of ethical research and to assist readers, we have replaced the children's real names with more English-sounding names below.)

A Developmental Psychological Reading

After the trading places assignment, the teachers and I spread the children's drawings out on a large table. What immediately came to mind as we tried to make meaning of the drawings were questions from developmental psychological discourse. In extensive research developmental psychological discourse has been singled out as the dominant discourse, or even what Michel Foucault and researchers following him would call the "regime of knowledge," within Swedish ECE practices (Burman, 1994; Dahlberg et al., 1999; Foucault, 1998; Hultqvist, 1990; Lenz Taguchi, 2000; Nordin-Hultman, 2004). Borrowing words from the feminist poststructural philosopher Butler, I would say that developmental psychological concepts are the tools that lie most readily at hand in the toolbox for our meaning-making when we try to understand children's work (Butler, 1993). For example, one teacher was fascinated that a couple of children had made drawings from above (Michael's aerial view of the table, Figure 10.2) and from above with a profile of himself (Nick's drawing, Figure 10.1). She commented that it would be difficult for a child, or even an adult, to draw a room from above as if the person drawing was not present in the scene. She claimed that these drawings were, in a sense, "weird," and "it is unnatural for children to draw from above because they are never above anything" (Lenz Taguchi, 1997). The teacher's comment revealed that she probably took for granted the Piagetian notion that children are egocentric, which, from the perspective of developmental psychology, means that children's behaviors must be viewed as coming from their own self-oriented perspective. From this Piagetian view of the child, the teacher believed that it would therefore be

unnatural for a child to draw a map as if he or she were a bird flying above the table because this would not be part of the child's own experience. From this view of children as egocentric and unable to imagine anything from a perspective other than their own, drawing an aerial view, like Michael did, would be as unnatural as a child's drawing himself in profile, as Nick did, rather than a full frontal view. Another preschool teacher also revealed that she took the tenant of the egocentric child for granted when she asked, "When did humans actually invent this idea of drawing from above in this unnatural way?" (Lenz Taguchi, 1997).

Thinking in line with and thus using the discursive tool of psychological discourse meant that the early childhood teacher thought it unnatural for Nick to draw himself in a profile, since the discourse informed her that the child is limited by his experience of seeing his full face in a mirror and, therefore, he would be unable to draw a profile of himself. Nick started off by drawing himself in a seemingly perfect profile (see Figure 10.1), and then drew the table and the other children from behind or with faces toward the spectator. The psychological *reading* of Nick's drawing is revealed in one of the preschool teacher's comments stating that he "lifts himself out of the picture and takes the perspective of the spectator" (Lenz Taguchi, 1997).

We asked ourselves why Michael and Nick would actually be able to draw an "unnatural" aerial view and why Nick was able to draw himself in profile. One preschool teacher explained that these particular children were able to do this because they had been drawing much more than other children since a very young age. Here, without realizing it at the time, the preschool teachers switched to a discourse of graphical competence, which can be seen in the *semiotic reading*, further elaborated below. From this perspective, these were simply skilled and artistic children with extensive drawing experience.

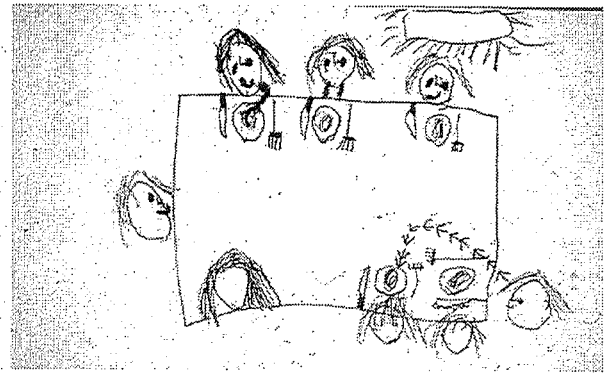

Figure 10.1. Nick's drawing

In such a reading these children had discovered the "unnatural" ways of drawing as an adult or an artistic performance, rather than drawing "naturally from within," as a child is supposed to do, according to the developmental psychological discourse. This way of explaining or justifying Michael's and Nick's "unnatural" drawings as "skilled" showed that the preschool teachers tried to fit this "unnaturalness" into the discourse of "the natural" by saying that the children had not simply developed skill through training, but also from unusual talents "by nature," that is, a talent given and expressed "from within," which is in line with, rather than in resistance to, a dominant psychological reading.

The graphical reading, then, was enmeshed within the discursive regime of psychological discourse in preschool teachers' thinking. So, even if it could be argued that the preschool teachers were initially doing *multiple* readings, when talking both of the egocentric child and graphical skills, it was not done as a deconstructive "resistance" reading. It was only later that true deconstructive talks began as teachers examined the two readings side by side and came to understand the two readings as different and equally important in understanding what each child had done and why. At this later time the reading of graphical skills was done in terms of resistance against the psychological reading, in an attempt to displace and reduce the strength and "naturalness" in that reading.

Another example of us reading from the psychological discourse of the egocentric child occurred when we tried to read Vanessa's drawing (Figure 10.3). Some teachers understood her drawing, simply showing the face of the friend with whom she wanted to change places, as "proof" of the idea of the egocentric child. Reading from a discourse of the egocentric child, Vanessa's drawing was considered natural (i.e., in line with the discourse most readily at hand), whereas, as pointed out above, drawing from above (an aerial view), or drawing oneself in profile, was considered unnatural in relation to the discursive regime of psychological discourse, or natural only in terms of being a result of inborn talent.

As I will argue later in this chapter, a deconstructive process requires simultaneous displacements, not only of taken-for-granted understandings, but also of how these readings are valued in an ethical sense. The teachers involved in this project and I, as researcher and part of the group, did not enter the realm of deconstructive resistive practice until we encountered Vanessa's and Margaret's drawings (Figure 10.4), which we viewed as problematic and lacking in several important ways, in spite of the naturalness we assigned to them. Our discussions took us into the next reading, *a constructivist reading*, where through extensive conversation about our disappointment in these drawings and our inability to value them as highly as the others, we began to make displacements. These displacements brought us to new ways of understanding and valuing the drawings in a decidedly

nonhierarchical way. Only then did it become possible for us to make a conscious choice to value the two girls' drawings on an equal plane with the drawings of what we had understood as their more "talented" classmates, Michael and Nick, in terms of the lessons each drawing held about the children's learning processes.

Displacing a Psychological Reading

When choosing to work with an assignment such as the spatial orientation project, preschool teachers as well as researchers are led by unconscious expectations and notions about the subject/content, in this case, about what a map is. These notions and expectations are tied to sometimes different and/or contradictory discourses that inform us about how to make meaning of what we see and hear, as well as how to value what we see and hear. In the initial conversation between the three preschool teachers and me, it became obvious that all four of us valued the drawings in similar hierarchical ways. We all had similar views about which drawings represented "talent" and which were lacking. We also shared similar ideas about the characteristics of a map.

Hence, we all thought that the two boys who had made drawings with a perspective from above (e.g., Michael, Figure 10.2), or almost from above with the profiles (e.g., Nick, Figure 10.1), had actually done maps, whereas the girls (Vanessa, Margaret, Julie, and Ann, Figures 10.3, 10.4, 10.5, and 10.6) and the remaining four boys had coped with the assignment in various ways. We saw Vanessa's drawing (Figure 10.3) and Margaret's drawings (Figure 10.4) as problematic and lacking as adequate responses to the question the teachers had put forward to the children. We questioned

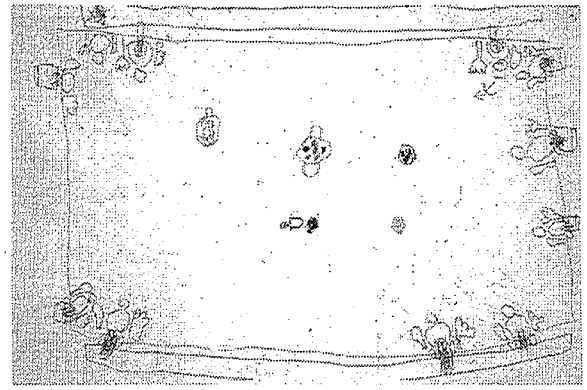

Figure 10.2. Michael's drawing.

whether the children would be able to use these drawings as maps in the upcoming session, for which we sketched out a scenario where the children could read each others' maps, trying to figure out who wanted to change places with whom. We asked ourselves if such a request of the children to read each others' maps would be ethically right, given the circumstances and readings at hand, where the lack of "map qualities" in some of the drawings seemed so obvious to us.

Importantly the questions related to the lack of "map quality" imply a dominant idea of what a map should look like. This idea contradicts the dominant expectations of what children's drawings are all about, from within an understanding of developmental psychology in the previous reading. So, on the one hand, the preschool teachers did *not* expect the children to draw maps that looked like maps, with a perspective from above, but, on the other hand, the assignment itself *required* exactly that "unnatural" skill from the children. Since the preschool teachers had not discussed their expectations and notions on map drawing beforehand, this had to be done later in the deconstructive talk that followed. This talk started by going back to the scene of the assignment by looking at the videotape. After a couple of minutes of watching the video, an obvious reading of the situation was evident. Many of the drawings could easily be understood as a completely adequate answer to the very question posed: "Please draw a map to the person you want to change places with. Don't tell anyone who it is while you are working, so we can guess later" (Lenz Taguchi, 1997). Below is Vanessa's obvious answer to this question (Figure 10.3). She wrote the name of the boy she wanted to change places with "as a whisper beside his ear, since we mustn't tell anybody who we want to change places with" (Lenz Taguchi, 1997).

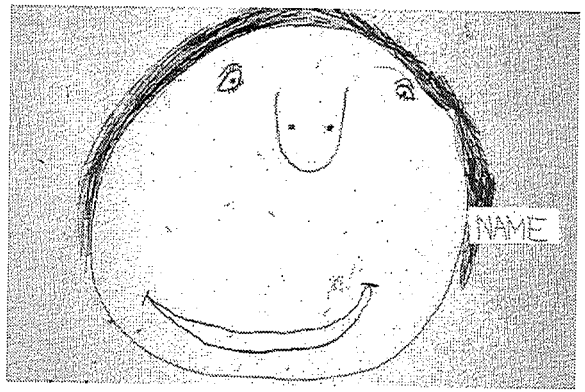

Figure 10.3. Vanessa's drawing.

As the teachers and I looked at the video, many things became visible, or clear, to us for the first time. We now had a better picture of the task from the children's perspective. What did "draw a map" mean to the children? Which part of the task was most salient to them, deciding whom they wanted to change places with, keeping the secret, or drawing a map? These questions, which arose from our viewing of the videotape, enabled us to rethink the values we used to decide which responses were adequate, which were highly artistic, and which were lacking in some way. Perhaps the children's drawings should not be viewed or evaluated as maps, but rather as responses to a question put before them in a context that did not signal any certain expectation of what a map should look like.

Armed with these new insights about the demands of the task, as seen from the children's perspective, it became easier to start reading against the grain, in "resistance" to our taken-for-granted notions about maps and about how children should respond to the task teachers had given them (Davies, 2000). One preschool teacher described a previous experience where she and her colleagues had developed a series of activities to help children gain spatial orientation skills in the woods, where they frequently played. This teacher insisted that children understood that it wasn't possible to make a map of the forest, the hill, and the lake from an egocentric viewpoint if they wanted another child to be able to follow their maps to locate a hidden treasure. She suggested that, in their daily lives, children typically encounter all sorts of maps, such as maps of the city, the subway system, and the ski slopes. Another preschool teacher then suggested that children also have extensive everyday experience with overhead perspectives, as, for example, when they build castles from blocks or sand and play with dolls or cars in these constructions on the floor or in sandboxes.

By thinking about children's previous experiences with maps and overhead perspectives, we were able to take another step toward displacing their original taken-for-granted ideas about how the children should have responded to the assignment. Now the discussion moved toward ways to successfully help children develop map-drawing competencies to represent their understandings of spatial relations. Perhaps we could build upon what they learned during an earlier spatial orientation assignment showing the way to school. We thought about ways to help the children reconstruct their maps of the route from home to school. As an alternative we considered making an overhead projection to help children recall their previous mapping experiences. This exploration of alternatives represented yet another small step forward in displacing dearly held ideas we had previously taken for granted.

A Constructivist Reading

To further investigate how to understand what some of us thought a map should look like, one of the preschool teachers did further investigations on children's map drawing (Hjelm, 1999). She came back to us with a constructivist reading inspired by the constructivist researchers Ference Marton and Shirley Booth (1997). According to these researchers, a map must include, at least to some degree, both logical and spatial correspondence. Children typically develop logical correspondence first and spatial correspondence later. Logical correspondence means that all the objects in the mapped area must be present in the drawing. The larger the number of objects, the higher the degree of logical correspondence required. Spatial correspondence refers to the map drawer's awareness of the relative space between the objects in the drawing, and how this corresponds to reality. The higher degree of spatial correspondence, the more the map represents actual spatial relationships in the real world.

Logical and spatial correspondence are not fully developed until school age at the earliest (i.e., about the age of 7). According to Marton and Booth (1997), a drawing that has neither logical nor spatial correspondence is not a map. Applying this definition, then, the teachers could see that Vanessa's and Margaret's drawings did not qualify as maps, and Julie's and Ann's drawings included little evidence of logical or spatial correspondence. However, both Michael's and Nick's drawings had a very high degree of logical and spatial correspondence.

In accordance with constructivist thinking, the interest of the teacher would now be to challenge the children to reach the goal of correct map-drawing skill, in line with constructivist knowledge on how children develop this skill. Children who showed evidence of neither logical nor spatial correspondence should be challenged to become aware of what logical correspondence means before spatial correspondence, since this is in line with how map-drawing skills generally develop. Children who showed awareness of logical correspondence should be challenged further with this, as well as becoming aware of spatial correspondence. However, since the children were only 5 years old, there was no need to challenge these children toward an awareness of spatial correspondence, since this normally might not be achieved due to the children's young age (Marton & Booth, 1997; Hjelm, 1999).

Displacements of the Constructivist Reading

Displacing our dominant developmental psychoanalytical notions about children's drawings with a constructivist reading did, however, not lead to

consensus on how to proceed with the project. One of the preschool teachers argued that focusing on map qualities as defined by Marton and Booth demonstrated that teachers still valued the qualities of Michael's and Nick's maps more than the maps of the other children, who had used different, perhaps highly inventive, strategies to represent their thinking. Many of the children's maps were still considered lacking, especially the girls' drawings. Another problem was that the teachers themselves had been unclear about the demands of the task when they asked the children to do maps. Neither the children nor the teachers and myself had a shared idea of what a map could or should be within the context of this assignment. In other words, it didn't seem fair to the children to stay with a constructivist reading. It seemed necessary to do more and other readings of the drawings to be able to sort out where we were in this project and what new steps and challenges to pursue.

In addition to this, and perhaps more importantly, we began to ask ourselves about the process of using multiple readings as a tool for pedagogical analysis from an ethical point of view. Our discussions repeatedly evolved into a search for "excuses" to value all children's work, even if it did not include characteristics of a map. This aspect of our conversation represented an ethical struggle, in which the value of content knowledge and skill (in this case, how to draw a conventional map) was pitted against our desire to be equitable in valuing children's work. Also, we noticed a disturbing gender factor at play in both our psychological and our constructivist readings of the drawings. It was clearly boys who managed to draw maps that we prized most highly, either in terms of a naturally inborn talent or a highly developed technical skill using logical and spatial correspondence. The girls' drawings were clearly and typically relational (faces, chairs with hearts), or simply plain and uncomplicated compared to the boys' drawings.

Once we realized the value-based and gender-based biases in our earlier discussions, we also felt ethically compelled to make additional readings, now with our heightened awareness of equity, including gender equity, as an issue. Could it be possible, from such an ethical standpoint in relation to valuing the children's work, not just to challenge the other children in the direction of Michael's and Nick's techniques, but also to challenge these two boys to explore other means of expression and communication as the girls had done?

In relation to a constructivist reading, then, we realized that we did not want to confine our thinking about the children's work by focusing exclusively on pre-established conventions of map construction, such as logical and spatial correspondence or aerial perspective. We realized that we wanted to include aspects of equity in our further analyses. Two of the children (boys) obviously employed these conventions to a greater degree

than did the other children, but did this mean that these boys necessarily learned more from the task or had more important ideas to share than their peers who represented their thinking in other ways?

A Social Constructivist Reading

Consciously trying to think differently than from within the dominant psychological and the almost-as-dominant constructivist discourses, the preschool teachers now started to think in a kind of reverse logic. If a map-drawing is not about logical and spatial correspondence, as in the constructivist reading, or limited by children's egocentric thinking, as in the developmental psychological reading, how can we understand what map drawing might be? Shifting into reverse to think about what something is not is an important practice in the deconstructive "resistance" process, and refers to the practice of *"sous rature,"* translated as "under erasure" (Derrida, 1976). French philosopher Jacques Derrida, cited at the beginning of this chapter, conceptualized deconstruction as a movement from *within* the notions and discourses that inscribe our thinking. Putting a reading, concept, or understanding "under erasure" means that we cross it out, not to erase it forever, but to temporarily reverse and displace our understandings. The crossed-out word remains legible/readable, because we need and value it, but crossed out because we need to displace our taken-for-granted understanding in order to become more ethical listeners, thinkers, and practitioners (Derrida, 1976; Lather, 1995, 1997; Lenz Taguchi, 2000, 2003).

So, what other understandings of the children's work were possible? The preschool teachers initially tried to think about the purpose behind the drawings. What purpose did the children have in mind when they made the drawings? Did their drawings fulfill their goals? If we think of the general idea of a map, as well as these children's drawings, as a construction of the social world as each child experiences it, we begin to see each child's drawing as an expression of that child's understanding of the task and of map construction. The drawings had a purpose and a specific function: to convey certain information (Hjelm, 1999; Wood, 1992). With such a reading, we discovered another meaning in Vanessa's, Margaret's, Ann's, and Julie's drawings. In the drawing below, Juliet gave very clear and specific details about where she sat at the table, beside her two best friends, and whom she wanted to change places with at the other corner across the table (Figure 10.4).

In the session where the children read each other's drawings, all of the children easily read the girls' drawings, with the exception of a few difficult concepts that Ann's drawing evoked (discussed below). For example, every-

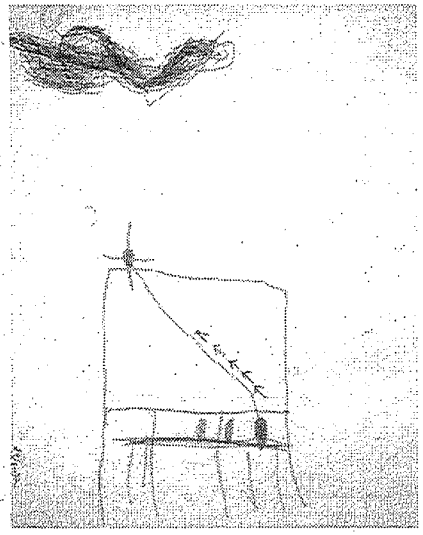

Figure 10.4. Julie's drawing.

one knew that Margaret was in love with Michael, so everyone quickly recognized exactly which children were represented by the two chairs with hearts over them. (See Figure 10.5.) And Vanessa's drawing was just as easy to read with the name of the boy she wanted to change places with written beside his ear (Figure 10.3).

During this session, teachers and children discussed various ways of responding to the assignment, as well as various ways to read the drawings. From the children's perspective, all drawings were adequate and functional in relation to the purpose of the assignment. These discussions of different drawing strategies inspired the children to attempt to draw different kinds of maps to fulfill the purposes they learned from one another or new ideas and purposes of maps they invented while playing. The children's interest in map-drawing continued and became a part of this particular classroom's culture during the next couple of years, even though the older children went on to school and younger children started. Map-drawing became a heritage from this 6-month project that left traces in both the environment and in the skills of this particular group of children.

This social constructivist reading of the drawings gave new meaning and made the girls' drawings more highly valued in the eyes of the preschool teachers. This new attitude toward the children's work was then transmitted to the children during subsequent activities, where the drawings were used as a starting point for discussing the readability. Such covert transmis-

sion of attitude and value helped the children value each others' drawings in a more equal manner, not thinking that one drawing was necessarily better than the other, but simply fulfilling the purpose of the map-drawing task in different ways.

Adults "hidden agendas" arising from dominant discourses that inform teachers' thinking and doing exude a powerful, palpable presence in every classroom. Children are sensitive and skillful readers of these adult agendas (Davies, 2003). In this case, children surely read the teachers' hidden agendas (preexisting, taken-for-granted notions) about the qualities of good and bad maps. Armed with new insights arising from their social constructivist readings, the teachers were now in a position to examine their "hidden agendas" openly and critically, with a view toward changing their everyday practice in ways that would welcome the children's perspectives on an assignment, as well as various appropriate and meaningful options for completing the task satisfactorily.

Here again, the ethical dimension of resistance to taken-for-granted ideas becomes apparent. By making our taken-for-granted notions visible to ourselves and one another during these deconstructive talks, we became able to displace them, making room for multiple ways of thinking, understanding, and doing—both for ourselves and for the children. However, I am not arguing here that a larger number of readings necessarily results in more opportunities for making more ethical choices. Rather, I want to point out that dominant discourses exclude other understandings, and that more than one or two readings makes possible displacements of taken-for-granted ways of valuing the children's strategies. In addition, more than one or two readings may make more ethical choices possible as we "problematize" our ways of understanding and valuing what the children have done.

This reasoning can be understood with other words, namely that making excluded or absent understandings visible doesn't necessarily mean that a truer or more virtuous choice can be made. If this were so, we would be able to develop a finite list of readings, which would inevitably enable us to identify an objective, universally acceptable, "most ethical" approach. (For more on this, see ethical particularism in Kihlbom, 2002.) However, a single, universally acceptable, "most ethical" choice is not possible. Therefore, all we can realistically hold ourselves accountable for are these: (1) trying to make visible the conditions and readings we believe ourselves to have (what we view as natural and taken-for-granted); (2) when possible, trying to make supplementary readings with the help of other theories, thereby making visible the absences and exclusions in our immediate taken-for-granted reading; (3) consciously trying to problematize what we take for granted and resist the understandings that dominate our thinking and are most available to us; and, lastly, (4) making new choices, some of a more unconscious kind revealed in our attitudes toward the children and their work, and others, very conscious and driven by our sense of responsibility to our new understandings of ourselves, our work, and the children. Hopefully we will be able to perceive those different choices as more ethically framed and considered options, and, from that perspective, select the best choice in relation to the circumstances and context for the children and ourselves as their teachers.

A Semiotic Reading

I will finish this example by offering a fourth, quite simplified reading, which I have, in a perhaps inadequately shallow sense, called a *semiotic reading*. Such a reading takes into account our understandings of the children's use of different kinds of signs and symbols as they worked on the changing places assignment. In Swedish ECE practice, children's drawings have been seen as expressions of the child's inner psychological and cognitive development through essentialist and universal stages (Lind & Åsén, 1999).

Because of this widely held view that drawings represent a child's inner self, framed and limited by the developmental stage the child is in, questioning the qualities of small children's drawings and paintings is often still seen as taboo. According to this line of thinking, the quality of the work will naturally improve as the child matures mentally, psychologically, and physiologically.

However, a semiotic reading situates the drawings within a cultural, rather than an intrapsychic or developmental, context. From the semiotic perspective, we began to think of the drawings as expressions of culturally and socially specific ways of using signs and symbols to communicate meaning. From the drawings we could see which signs and symbols the children had already "taken up" from the various contexts of their lives. These expressions can be taught and practiced within culture, independent of the child's "natural development." According to the social constructivist reading, then, drawing is a means of achieving a purpose (Lind & Åsén, 1999). The cultural signs learned are tools in these expressions, as in Margaret's drawing, using two different signs to tell everyone she wanted to change places with the person she was in love with (Figure 10.5). According to this reading, children can improve their competence in graphic expression by practicing, as in the previous example of both Micheal and Nick.

In investigative projects that involve drawings and paintings, it is crucial for teachers to analyze the graphic aspects of the children's experience. However, not all subject matter lends itself well to drawing and painting as a primary means of investigation and exploration. Even if drawing can be

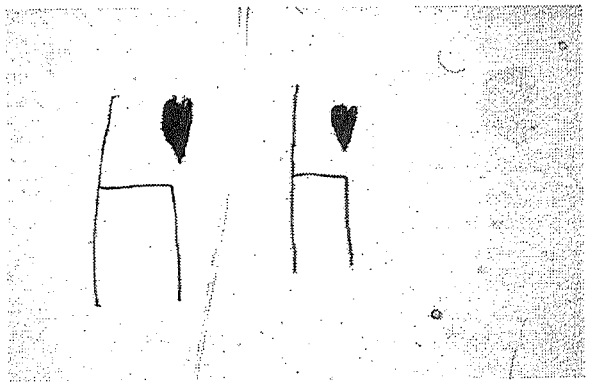

Figure 10.5. Margaret's drawing.

understood as a way of thinking using hand, pen, and paper, giving another dimension to the child's understanding of the subject, some subjects are perhaps better thought of and explored through other means of expression, such as bodily movements, dramatizations, construction in all different kinds of materials, sound, voice, or photographs. We must beware of the temptation to equate children's drawings and paintings with the totality of what they know on any given subject. For some children drawing is a good way of thinking and theorizing, but for others using their bodies, building, or thinking aloud are better ways.

We must deconstruct how we value children's ways of learning, as well as their ways of expressing what they are learning. We must think about the conditions that invite children to use a multitude of ways to express their knowledge, their thoughts, and their questions. Lastly, when adding new ways of making meaning and expressing knowledge, we must guard against favoring certain expressions we personally like over others, thus normalizing those we prefer while dismissing other expressions that might actually constitute a better way of meaning-making for certain children in a specific context (Lenz Taguchi, 2000).

Conceptualizations and Meaning-Making through the Body and the Documents

In this part of the chapter I offer two brief examples of deconstructional learning processes carried out by the children themselves. I start with the reading of Ann's drawing discussed above, and then move to a small part of a math project.

In Ann's drawing (Figure 10.6), her purpose was to show that she wanted to change places with Margaret on the other side of the table. In the session where the children read each others' maps, the other children read Ann's map as if she wanted to change places with the child sitting directly opposite her across the table. But Ann insisted that this reading was wrong. To illustrate her thinking, she actually walked across the table to show the person she wanted to change places with. The children seemed confused, conceptually, by the difference between "sitting opposite" someone and "sitting on the opposite side of the table." Ann didn't actually sit opposite Margaret, but she did sit on the other side of the table in a more diagonal direction. The other children insisted that Ann's map didn't work if she really wants to change places with Margaret. Intense negotiation ensued among the children, punctuated with lots of walking on the table, until Ann realized that her map didn't convey her intention. The teachers did not intervene as this negotiation continued. The teachers understood the children's walking across this table, which measures two meters in width, as an important way for the children to physically understand various conceptualizations. By using their bodies and comparing this physical experience with Ann's map, the children eventually constructed a shared understanding to which they could all agree.

The point I want to make here is that the children used documentation (the drawing) as a starting point for negotiations and, eventually, common understanding. Crucial to this process is using the differences in the readings as a force in their shared learning processes. In Derridean deconstruction "the play of difference," practicing "sous rature" (under erasure) becomes a means of displacing, taking on new perspectives and making new connections, and thereby, making, what I with a poststructural discourse would call supplementary and inclusionary understandings (i.e., using many theories to

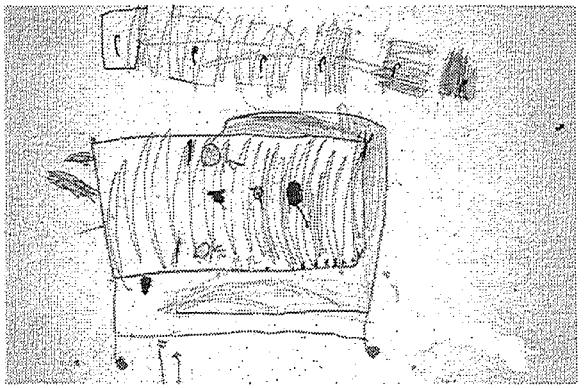

Figure 10.6. Ann's drawing.

understand in multiple and shifting ways). Differences can be made visible by using all different kinds of expressions. In the brief example above and in the one yet to be told below, the child's own body becomes a tool for grappling with and resolving differences in terminology and conceptual understandings. This tool is often underestimated in early childhood settings.

The second example is part of a math project from another preschool that is located in a suburb west of Stockholm in a middle-class area. The preschool serves about 70 children age 1–5, with about 23 children in each of the three groups, where about three full-time preschool teachers in each group are scheduled weekdays between 7:00 AM and 6:00 PM. In the math project, children had previously been involved in a long project about birds of different kinds, and now knew a lot about birds, especially the blue tits that came to the bird feeder, in the shape of a small wooden cottage, outside of the classroom window every day thoughout the winter. As part of the bird study, the children had built a giant crow, constructing the beak and the claws in clay and wire. During these construction activities, the children frequently raised questions of size. However, their preschool teachers decided that, although size could be discussed in more general terms, actual experiences with measurement should not be the focus just then because the children were equally interested in the construction of the bird, as well as the bird's flying ability, its private and family life, and other aspects of its existence and nature.

But again and again the children brought up the question of size and measurement. One day a boy said that now he knew exactly how wide the white-tailed eagle, Sweden's largest bird, is when it flies. According to the boy, the white-tailed eagle is as wide as four 5-year-old children standing side by side with their arms stretched as far as possible. The other children immediately ran up and tried it out. The white-tailed eagle was simply huge! Figure 10.7 presents one of the spontaneous documentations of this event drawn by one of the children.

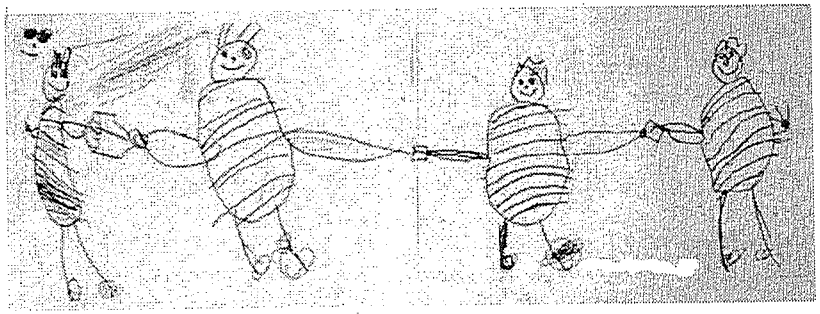

Figure 10.7. Image of the white-tailed eagle represented by children holding hands

"How many blue tits long is the white-tailed eagle, then?" a girl asked. The children started to measure with their hands. The white-tailed eagle measured 81 blue tits! The excited children now started to measure each other. Elsa and Josephine lay down on the floor to be measured by Jonathan and Kevin. Jonathan exclaimed, "Elsa measured 11 blue tits. I measured with my index finger and thumb and pretended that it was the same size of a blue tit. But Kevin measured Josephine and she measured 27 blue tits." The children found the difference puzzling, since they could see that Elsa and Josephine are almost equal in height. One child suggested that the girls lie on the floor beside each other so they could compare. Elsa was just a little bit taller than Josephine. The following anecdote is from the children's discussions.

Teacher: We can see that they are almost the same height, and yet there is a big difference when you counted your blue tits. Why is that?

Mary: It is weird because Elsa is a little taller than Josephine.

Johanna: It should have been 11 blue tits on Elsa and 10 on Josephine.

Jonathan: I think Kevin took shorter steps with his fingers and that is why he got 27. I think Kevin used blue-tit babies when he measured. If you pretend that the blue tit is larger then you count fewer blue tits. When you make smaller blue tis with your fingers, there are more. When you measure smaller, there is more!

Kevin: I want to try again! Last time I used small blue tits, now I will use big ones. There is a difference if you do them small or big! (Åberg & Lenz Taguchi, 2005).

The group of children reasoned that, with a "standardized" blue tit, everything could be measured. The children now negotiated further and decided that each would draw a blue tit. They would then choose the one they liked best and reproduce hundreds of copies. In choosing a blue tit to be reproduced, the children negotiated about the question from the preschool teacher about what qualities such a blue-tit must have to best serve the purpose. After thorough discussion and comparison, the unanimous choice was a blue tit in a definite side perspective with tail and beak stretched out. The children carried out this process largely on their own initiative, only supported by the teacher nearby taking notes, who offered one or two questions to help them focus. The preschool teachers helped by making the 100 copies and laminating the selected blue tit so it would be easier to use for measuring.

These children practiced what we sometimes call a "pedagogy of listening," which includes practicing asking questions, visualizing strategies and differences, and negotiating. Therefore, the children are used to carrying out such negotiation practices to the extent that they can perform them largely on their own, imitating the questions teachers have asked them, such as, "How did you think when you did this like that?" or "Explain to me what you mean when you say that" or "Please tell me how you have done this," and so forth. The children are also very aware of the documentation process, in fact, so aware that they would tell the teachers not to forget to put on the tape-recorder, switch on the camera, or take notes, if they did not themselves take care of it, by drawing, writing, and taking photographs.

From this time forward, the children measured everything with the help of blue tits. But soon another difference was made visible to the children as they cooperatively examined various documents such as drawings, photos taken by the children themselves, and notes in the large project documentation books the preschool teachers kept on the floor for everyone to add to, look at, write in, and negotiate meaning around. The children realized that if the blue tits were not put in a straight line with tail to beak, the number of blue tits would vary even though classmates were measuring the same object. Interestingly, this discovery was then used as a way to create more differences, rather than resolve them.

This bird study evolved into a year-long math project from these initial measuring investigations. This brief vignette from the large project provides an example of how difference, multiple understandings, and use of the body are central in children's learning processes. Learning resulted when their teachers made it possible for children to ask questions, theorize, try out, investigate, document, and negotiate their different understandings. When children engaged in asking questions, theorizing, trying out, investigating, documenting, and negotiating meaning, they also experienced, directly and indirectly, the ethical aspects of confronting and resolving differences. For example, these children encountered ethical issues and questions when differences in their thinking became visible to them. Instead of valuing different results as right or wrong or better or worse ways of measuring, these children were used to thinking of other ways to explain differences, as we saw in their discussion of the way results differed because some children measured with baby blue tits while other children measured with larger blue tits. This way of thinking in terms of different strategies or explanations, instead of valuing in terms of right or wrong, better or worse, is, I would say, a more ethical way of handling difference and more productive in relation to the learning involved. When difference is honored as central to the way we understand the world and each other, learning becomes cooperative meaning-making with a strong ethical dimension.

Deconstructive Talks at the Heart of an Ethics of Deconstructive Resistance

I have elsewhere more thoroughly theorized on the practice of deconstructive talks, conceptualized as a conversation between theories of Jacques Derrida's (1976) writing "sous rature" (under erasure) and Jürgen Habermas's (1988) communicative action (Lenz Taguchi, 2000). This conversation shows that Habermasian theory of communicative action is, by itself, inadequate for the kind of negotiated learning practices important to postmodern education. Derridean deconstruction practice works as a supplement to Habermasian theory because it adds inclusionary, displacing and transgressing qualities to meaning-making as the central aspect of learning, and is not simply trying to come to what Habermas would understand as an agreed-upon truth and/or intersubjective meaning-making. Derridean deconstruction practice also adds the dimension of teacher planning with the explicit purpose of creating learning challenges for individuals and groups in cooperative learning situations. Deconstructive talk relies on difference (theorized from the Derridean concept of *différance*) in the meaning-making process, rather than, as in Habermasian theory, on identifying truth, truthfulness, and rightness in the communicated arguments. In a deconstructive talk, difference is understood as a productive force rather than as a threat to consensus or a problem to overcome (as in Habermasian theory). Deconstruction is about disruptions, destabilizations, undermining and challenging taken-for-granted notions, values, practices, and pedagogy-as-usual. The major challenge in deconstructive talks is the requirement for self-reflection—thinking about *what and why* we see, hear, and value what we see, hear, and value. For example, in the map-drawing activity, teachers engaged in deconstructive talk had to examine what discourses about children, about learning, and about map-drawing informed our ways of thinking and valuing. This reflection, then, enabled us to resist what we previously took for granted and think differently. As the feminist poststructural educational researcher Bronwyn Davies has stated, "Any reading against the grain implies a detailed knowledge of the grain itself" (2000, p.114). The more you know about how the taken-for-granted notions in your own thinking have been constructed, the easier it is to resist such taken-for-granted thinking.

An educational practice that attempts to put taken-for-granted notions under continuous deconstructive "erasure" can be conceived of in terms of a "self-wounding laboratory as we attempt to be accountable to complexity. Here, thinking the limit becomes our task" (Lather, 1995, p. 3). So, instead of emancipation from false consciousness, as in critical theory of early feminism, we continuously trouble, as Lather expresses it, and contest the things we think we cannot think without. Lather writes about a diaspora

(i.e., a forced exile), forcing oneself out of one's best way of knowing (Lather, 1997). The preschool teacher (as the researcher) is thus problematized as "the one who knows" and is "placed outside of mastery and victory narratives" (Lather, 1995, p. 3). In other words, teachers problematize the usual view of themselves as someone who owns certain knowledge to be transmitted to children, and the researchers problematize the standard view that they can produce true knowledge about teaching practice. Instead both try to engage in co-constructive practices of knowledge with the children and the researched, trying, at least temporarily, to force ourselves out of the unavoidable position of power in relation to the other. In addition, both the teacher and the researcher take into account their own impact and effect on the learning process, in terms of everything from material preconditions, aspects of time, place, questions, body language, and so forth (i.e., learning and research are situated in a specific context that must be made visible and displaced *from within*). As such, Derridean deconstruction can also be understood simultaneously as a political and *feminist* movement. Hekman commented on criticisms of deconstruction as negative—destructive—in the following way, as she implied the feminist aspect of it:

> The point of Derridean deconstruction, however, is not to erase categories, but to displace the oppositions that have structured the dichotomies of Western thought. So conceived, deconstruction is not a negative project; it is not an effort to reverse binary oppositions or to replace them with a new orthodoxy. Rather it involves the displacing of the play of oppositions that has informed not only Western thought but also the inferior status of women. (1990, p. 26)

The feminist aspect concerns much more than this political aspect in the feminist poststructural theories of subjectification (Butler, 1997; Davies, 2000; Lenz Taguchi, 2004; Nordin-Hultman 2004), but I cannot discuss this here. However, this political aspect is not insignificant in relation to the obvious emancipative aspects that an ethic of resistance has on the female preschool teachers I have studied and worked with over the last 10 years (Lenz Taguchi, 2000). The deconstructive talk invites preschool teachers to a practice that attempts equality in meaning-making. By emphasizing difference, multiple readings, and equality in evaluation, the power of the *true–false* binary is undermined and sometimes dissolved.

Transgressing into an Inclusionary Poststructural Approach

One of the major challenges in educational methods, or what we in the Nordic region call pedagogy, is the problem of its normative character and

normalizing practices. One by one throughout the 20th century and continuing now into the 21st century, Nordic ECE pedagogy has been influenced by a succession of supposedly ideal normative and normalizing teaching methods and values. As these new theories come into favor, they often became reified in the state curriculum or directives from the Board of Social Affairs, which used to oversee early childhood services in preschools until ECE was integrated into the school system with the Ministry of Education as the responsible ministry in 1996.[2]

The selection of a pedagogical method is similar in many ways to the selection of a moral or ethical standpoint or action. From both an individualistic and a broader social perspective, we choose a pedagogical method in order to "do good." Critics of a poststructurally informed, deconstructive approach in ECE argue that it is too relativistic and too ambiguous. The critics argue that, by their very nature, eclectic practices are not sufficiently grounded in any one (universialist or better) theory and lack the normative qualities expected of a robust pedagogy. But, as ethical philosopher Ulrik Kihlbom wrote in his argument on the decisiveness of ethical particularism, as opposed to an universalist ethic, which rests on assumptions that virtue is a question of all or nothing, "The morally competent or virtuous person is a moral ideal, which probably no one ever fully satisfies" (2002, p. 141). An ethical particularist stance, just as a poststructuralist stance, understands moral issues to be essentially nonuniversalist, and that persons and actions must be understood contextually, the very same way multiple readings of pedagogical practice are done contextually, as shown above. We learn how to become morally competent persons within a specific social culture, although the existence of human virtuous ideals cannot be denied (Kihlbom, 2002).

In what I theorize as an ethic of resistance, such a morally virtuous human ideal is taking responsibility by acknowledging and making visible multiple ways of understanding and making meaning of a specific content or situation. The deconstructionist philosopher Jacques Derrida talks about the force of what he calls *Necessity*, which simultaneously acknowledges the necessity of human ideals as it contains the necessity of questioning them.

The consequence of this reasoning is that poststructural deconstruction is and will always be a movement *from within* the modernist vision of wanting to do, if not better, but definitely "good," where the "good" is hence negotiable and subject to a continuous state of change in time and location. Or, as Derrida explained in an interview by referring to his own practice as a philosopher, in terms of a necessary deconstructive movement from *within*, and (equally) necessary modernist desires, ideals, and visions that make us in a sense human:

> I confess that everything I oppose, so to speak, in my texts, everything that I deconstruct—presence, voice, living, and so on—is exactly what I'm after in life. I love the voice, I love presence.... So, I'm constantly denying, so to speak, in my life what I'm saying in my books or my teaching. Which doesn't mean that I don't believe what I write, but I try to understand why there is what I call Necessity, and I write this with a capital 'N' ... a Necessity which compels me to say that there is no immediate presence. (2003, p. 8)

An important aim of this chapter is, therefore, to try to challenge the modernist exclusionary idea of finding and stipulating *one* successful learning theory for postmodern education. Instead I want to suggest a poststructuralist-inspired, theoretically multidimensional and inclusionary approach to learning theories and the practices that arise from them. Such inclusions, importantly, are here done from within the discourse of the poststructural linguistic turn, and the notion of that "there is nothing outside the text ... there has never been anything but writing" (Derrida, 1976). These words refer to the notion that nothing can exist to us, and/or be understood in any kind of way, without being given a meaning (i.e., without being, in a certain understanding, *written* or *languaged*—"textualized"—text). It is from *within* this notion of cooperative constructions and formations of meanings as discourses that different aspects of learning are included in a theoretical multidimensional approach to learning.

Inclusionary Conclusions

In the first years of the 21st century theories of knowledge and learning have shifted toward a constructivist and/or social constructivist discourse, with a dominant view of the child as a co-constructor of culture and knowledge. Constructivist and social constructivist notions clearly provide the pedagogical framework for the Swedish state curriculum, published in 1998. In this chapter I have focused on a specific, limited aspect of Swedish ECE practice, namely what is commonly referred to as Reggio Emilia-inspired. In this small corner of Swedish practice, early childhood educators have further transgressed this shift toward constructivism or social constructivism by venturing into a theoretically multidimensional and inclusionary poststructural approach to learning and daily teaching practice. I have called this a practice of an ethics of resistance. Deconstructional talks take an inclusionary approach in this practice. Many different kinds of theoretical readings and understandings are used to help both children and preschool teachers understand and value the phenomena studied in multiple ways. In addition, multiple readings also serve as a vehicle for negotiating ethically grounded choices. Thus, the ethical aspect of this practice resides in its context-sensitive particularism, as well as in its creative, imaginative

way of visualizing differences, silences, what is not immediately present, or what is excluded, side by side with what is taken-for-granted and what is present or obvious to us. In this way, deconstructional resistance of the kind I have tried to illustrate in this chapter may disrupt unequal power relationships hidden in binary constructs, including adult–child, theory–practice, individualistic learning–cooperative learning, and learning–play, to name but a few of the either-or concepts that riddle educational discourse. The purpose of the ethical resistance I have been talking about is not to reverse these binaries, but rather to attempt to continuously and repeatedly dissolve and transgress them. Thus, in a definitely modernist sense, by participating in ethical resistance we attempt not only to do good, but more importantly, to do good given the particular contextual situation and the readings possible from "wherever we are ... in the text where we already believe ourselves to be" (Derrida, 1976).

NOTES

1. Researchers from Harvard Graduate School of Education have researched on the pedagogical practice in Reggio Emilia for several years during the almost 40-year-old project Zero, which has become an institution that conducts basic research on cognition, learning, and pedagogy, with a continuing special focus on the arts. American researchers, Howard Gardner, Ben Mardell, Mara Krechevsky, and Steve Seidel, have participated in a co-production with Reggio Children published in 2001 called *Making Learning Visible: Children as Individual and Group Learners.*
2. ECE practices in Sweden have been regulated by the Social Ministry and the Board of Social Affairs up until 1996, when ECE was integrated into the school system. The first state curriculum for ECE practices was legislated in 1998. ECE is now the first part of a lifelong learning system in Sweden regulated by the Educational Ministery. (For further information on this, see Lenz Taguchi & Munkhammar, 2003.)

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CHAPTER 11

AN OUTSIDER'S PERSPECTIVE

Childhoods and Early Education in the Nordic Countries

Judith T. Wagner
Whittier College

Cross-cultural study informs us through the juxtaposition of the familiar and the new, the known and the exotic. The best lessons lie in the differences. Over the last 18 years of work and study in the Nordic countries, I have collected hundreds of photographs, field notes, and mental images, each vividly illustrating an aspect of Nordic childhood that fascinates me or shocks me by its stark contrast to what I would expect at home in America. I have photos of toddlers running naked in a daycare center, climbing a rappelling wall, using a fork to eat spaghetti with some success (and some mess!), and skiing nimbly down a Norwegian mountainside. I have images of 10 toddlers, all under 3 years of age, milling about on an underground platform in their snowsuits, waiting for a train headed for the forest where their outdoor preschool is located. Their daycare teachers are nearby, but they do not hover or admonish the children to stay away from the edge, as

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